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MNFI STRATOPS, Deputy J3

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Embassy Annex, International Zone, Baghdad

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

### Abstract

I am a career infantry and SF officer. Australia is a close ally of the United States because our strategic interests often closely align with the United States, but there are critical and too-often unrecognized distinctions in viewpoints and outlooks. Australian soldiers and officers greatly value serving with Americans, and they sense and appreciate Americans' respect and appreciation for Australia. The bulk of Australian forces will withdraw in a few months, and that comes with some sense of disappointment at not staying through the end of the UNSCR. [I think this reflects a career soldier's disappointment at leaving a mission, period, but even more so when the job seems not quite complete. I think the UNSCR and Australian political factors are simply the conditions that trigger that sense of loss, but that the feeling would tend to be there in almost any case. It is a feeling I expect to have when I leave, because I will know there is still more work to be done.] General Petraeus is a great strategic mentor. Common soldiers are an inspiration. I greatly appreciate the educational opportunities the military has given me. As Deputy J3, my responsibilities are what I make them, and fundamentally that is to complement the J3 and make STRATOPS work effectively as a team. When I arrived in August, we were focused on combat and war fighting. The measure of improvement in the situation is the fact that we are now much more engaged in governance issues and much less in war fighting concerns. 18:54.

### Interview

#### *What is your professional background, military and civilian?*

At the moment, I am the Deputy Commander of Special Operations in Australia, and I expect to return to that position at the conclusion of this assignment. I have served in the Australian Army for 27 years. I spent the first third of my career in the infantry and the rest in Special Operations, in various assignments, deployments, and in peacetime. I have a BA and three Masters degrees, including International Relations, Strategic Studies and Human Resource Management.

*Are you familiar with (b)(6) and his work with the Australian Memorial?*  
1:45. Yes, I have met him.

*In some of his writings, he's talked about the unique circumstances that shape Australia's strategic outlook. How would you explain, to an American audience, the factors and outlook that shape Australian strategic thinking?*

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2:30. That is a big question. In part, to answer that question, it is difficult to do so without appreciating Australians and their culture, because the answer to the question is as much about Australia's search for its cultural and national identity, which is an on-going and lively discussion, as it is about any thing else. If you had asked me the question five years ago, the answer would have been different than the one I would give you today. It also would be different than the answer you might get from another Australian, depending on their background. First and foremost, I would point out that Australia, much like the United States, is very much a nation of mixed identities. It is a nation with many people who have migrated from other places. We're an eclectic society with an eclectic outlook, but we're also searching for what is that golden thread that defines us all universally, if in fact it is possible to do something like that. In terms of outlook towards the United States, well that outlook as well has been shaped by the times. As a military man, I can only give you my perspective. That would be that there's always been an affinity between Australians and Americans since World War II, and the ups and downs aside, that outlook has been overwhelmingly positive, and that has been manifested in a number of ways. In a military sense, we've fought alongside Americans in many conflicts, and we've been very proud to do so. But, we don't do so because you're Americans, we do so because of our own national interests, and the fact that we fight alongside Americans is more of an accident of strategic circumstances, a shared outlook on global and regional security. There are many commonalities in terms of international actions and actors and how things should be done, and that creates a confluence of outlook which in many ways has shaped how we've worked together through much of the twentieth century and now into the first part of the twenty first.

5:15. So we look at the Americans now . . . the Australians, they're a small power, there's only about 25 million of us, and so our outlook is also shaped by that, and when we work alongside Americans, and individually, it is a wonderful relationship on the whole. We've believe we're well respected and appreciated, and I know from my own experience that every time we work with Americans in a coalition it's been deeply rewarding. However, there's also a sense that being so small, we can be the mouse alongside the elephant, and sometimes our views or issues can be lost in the enormity of it all, and that sometimes as well, I find that, we get on so well with each other, that the Americans around me, including my counterparts here, can sometimes just seem to forget that I'm not an American, in terms of assumed similarities, assumed outlooks, assumed beliefs in how to fight a war, national identity issues, foreign policy matters, use of force, you name it. Now, in most cases, that would be 90% correct, but in that critical 10%, there are often differences of outlook and view, and that shouldn't surprise anyone.

6:45. In the case here at the moment, if I was to talk to you today, and I'm not sure I would like this published, but, I feel today, as my government has announced the drawdown of our forces here in theater, where the vast preponderance of our force here in Iraq will be gone by June or July of this year, I do feel some disappointment, not at the political decision--that is not mine to ponder--but I feel some disappointment that the realities of our political circumstances mean that we are drawing down so short of the UNSCR lapsing at the end of the year. It would have been so neat for a whole range of reasons if we had stayed here with our current force until that UNSCR mandate had

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lapsed. So I do feel a tinge of regret at that. I also feel a degree of regret that Australia being so far away, that what actually is happening here in Iraq and what all I've had to live with here in the last nine months that I've been here, is largely unknown, and [unknowable?] Iraq at the moment has flopped off the national media dialogue. Most of the focus here is on the small-town type news issues. The Australian footprint has been located in a quiet area of the theater. In the nine months that I've been here, I don't believe the Australian battle group has been briefed once in the BUA, and as the Deputy J3 for the Force, I [?] find the province is quiet in Australians' outlook in many regards is largely shaped by that. Low profile, not much to say, and as a result, I think the real achievements that have been gained here in the theater, and I would have hoped [unintelligible] Australian troops would have been the shared achievements of the coalition, not the national achievements of one element of that coalition, and what I see here as a coalition officer who happens to be an Australian, not an Australian in Iraq who happens to be in a coalition officer. So the mission here, and the people I'm working with, largely transcends those national boundaries and those uniform colors, and the real sense of where this mission is going, the ownership of the mission and its achievements and goals, are things that I now feel strongly about, and if that is a testimony to effective integration, and if that is also a testimony of how well we work together as Australians and Americans, then we're doing something well at some level, and in a force like this, with an Australian to be the Deputy J3 for General Petraeus, and I'm not the first to do so, I think it is a much appreciated manifestation of trust, genuine trust by American senior leadership in Australia and Australians. It's a genuine undertaking of what it is to work in a modern coalition, and the access I've been provided, particularly to classified information and being part of the small group has been wonderful, and I've never felt to be anything other than an integrated member of the team, and it does disappoint me that how this war is being fought at this level and how this integration is happening, and how the attitudes towards coalitions are playing out here, largely will never be known back there in Australia. I think I'll find myself largely returning to an audience and a military leadership who won't know--I won't say won't care, because that's a little tough--but in many cases won't know to ask.

***Sir, another retrospective question, what individuals, events, or institutions would you point to as having been particularly important to your professional development?***

11:25. Clearly, who I am and what I've achieved, I think has much more to do with the people around me and the opportunities that have been given to me than I feel it has to do with the raw stuff that is made on the inside. I think, in terms of shaping and influential issues, it is hard to know at the moment. I would say that General Petraeus is a wonderful mentor. Not for any personal contact he has with me, but in terms of the example he sets as a strategic leader and a person. I think the example of the common soldier. Whenever I've come into personal contact with that example, that icon, that has always been very uplifting and motivational for me. Because, at the common soldier level, they represent to me something that is very important, and that is the raw stuff of achievement and compassion of doing a job well done and professionalism at the coal face that is not cloaked in all the bureaucracy and all the fluff that is often comes with senior rank and politics and interagency relationships and the double speak that is so

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often associated with that. At the soldier level, you get genuine language, genuine views, and that theme is something that resonates very powerfully with me, and I do try, as much as I'm able to, convey that myself. Other than that, I could give you a few slew of people that . . . I think . . . the greatest enlightenment for me has been, I guess, my tertiary education and the opportunity to broaden my intellect beyond the boundaries of just the military. I love to study and to read widely, and being able to be introduced to those areas, and the military giving me those opportunities, the military, other than my family, has probably been one of the most influential things that I would point to.

I'll need to go in a tic, so I might give you one more question.

***I'll go to an easier question. As the Deputy J3, what are your responsibilities?***

14:30. That's not an easy question, but I'm the Deputy J3 here but I'm part of a team. My responsibilities here are largely what I've made them. I'm the Deputy to the J3, and I very much see my job as to complement the J3, and make sure that the outputs that fall across the J3 portfolio are as effective we can make them as a team. And if on a certain day that calls upon me to make certain engagements, and another something completely different, then that is my role. I am absolutely determined that the appointment does not grace the person, the person graces the appointment. So I'm here to complement my commander and to support the team in achieving the goals that are required, whatever they are.

15:15. My duties, I could list those for you ad nauseum. There's a whole range of things that I've been involved with here. By virtue of my fairly unique background, I've been able to get involved with . . . [so] what are some major roles that I've gotten involved in here either in initiating or in driving, and here, let me be a little self-aggrandizing. I've been doing, sort of the charcoal sketches on the canvas for others to come and paint. So, the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) that has just stood up and I understand is about to be cleared back at the Joint Staff, was my idea. Completely readjusting and fixing up the Person and Hostage Recovery Arrangements in the theater is something that I have led, and I do note that in the last three months since doing so we have reduced the number of hostage cases by one-third in the theater. I've been deeply involved in attempting to make the Joint Headquarters work more effectively with the Iraqis, and lots of other things.

***How would you explain MNFI and this headquarters to a young officer who walks into this headquarters and is completely bewildered?***

16:50. MNFI is the operational engine for the field operations. It takes General Petraeus' intent and it turns it into actions that the Corps and the action arms in the battle space can get on and fight the war and achieve the missions. We're the no-kidding, get-the-job-done organization.

***When did you arrive and what was the tactical and strategic situation at the time?***

17:45. I arrived in August of 2007. We had just come out of a very heavy operational period with Fardh al Qanoon. We were just starting to make headway in actions against AQI and JAM criminal Special Groups actions here in Baghdad. Since then, we've seen

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the trend lines drop off pretty precipitously, across the theater. It was an organization, STRATOPS, that was very focused on war fighting and combat issues. I do note since then that STRATOPS has broadened significantly as the mission has changed. We're doing a lot more now linked to governance. And with that, I'll need to go. 18:54.

*Thank you, sir.*

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