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Abstract

In January 2007, our MNFI group inherited LTG Charilli's transition plan. It assumed that we were the problem and the solution was to remove ourselves from the situation to improve security and stability. It was not completely wrong, but it was the wrong time for it. In the first half of 2007, though violence rose, things felt different. Abu Ghraib insurgents reached out to us and leadership allowed it. That was strategically important. The JAM ceasefire was another strategic event. The September testimony bought us time. IFCNR held important meetings. I visited in May and June at P4's request to work on reconciliation and northern Arab-Kurd issues. O4 was slated to be VCSA, but when I knew he was coming back, there was no question I would come; I'd already promised him I would. The Strategic Framework and security agreement put us in a bazaar situation. We are the buffer between civil war and state collapse, the COR is wrapped up in personal interests and petty disputes. There is no national vision. The problem is how to turn this into a strategic partnership; otherwise, Iran wins. 24:16.

Interview

We finished the last interview in January '07 with your meetings in the small group. What were the key changes that group came up with?

Not too much on AQI. We focused on the reconcilable and the irreconcilable. The Gol must show itself more fair and less sectarian. There were a range of tactics, to get out among the population, to change our mindset. Iraqi civilians. We inherited a Transition Plan from LTG Charilli. It was based on the assumption that we were the problem and that we had to transition, to remove ourselves from Iraq and from the situation in order to improve security and stability. It was not completely wrong, but the timing of the concept was the problem. We put that plan on hold.

Violence continued escalating through the first half of 2007. That must have been difficult. Violence did keep going up until early July, and there were the bombings of the parliament and the bridge. Nonetheless, it felt different. From January, we were getting extra forces and brigades. There were some positive movements. Abu Ghraib insurgent reached out to us for help. The leadership allowed it, and that was a strategically important moment. Then, there was the Shia ceasefire after the Karbala event, and that was another strategic event.

What was the importance of the September testimony?

It was hugely important. Congress was ready to turn all this off. It takes about three-months for events in Iraq to catch up with Washington. We did have important indicators that things were looking better.

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IFCNR met with Sunnis, the Sahwa at Abu Graib, and met with former Iraqi Army personnel. We updated the commander's intent. We focused on reconciliation, not on military operations. I gave the full range. Analysis was not based on the enemy. What I found was that the brigades and battalions got it [COIN]. The divisions were slower.

I left Iraq at the end of 2007. In May and June, I returned on P4's request to work on reconciliation and northern Arab-Kurd issues. At the time, O4 was slated to be the VCSA. I had already promised that if he came back to Iraq that I would join him. When he was named, it went without saying I would return.

What is the situation today?

We are dealing with the Strategic Framework and the security agreement. It is a bazaar situation. We are the buffer between civil war and state collapse. In the CoR, politicians are wrapped up in personal interests and petty disputes. Iran is feeding this immature debate and squabbles. Attacks are at their lowest levels in years, but the underlying conflicts are still unresolved. Those in power returned from political exile and lack connections to the populace; they're linked to Iran. The future is up for grabs.

There is no national vision, one that can guide them through the hydrocarbons law or the SOFA.

What else might you add?

The key is how do we leave Iraq with a strategic partnership? Otherwise, if chaos reigns and Iran rules the region, the history will see this as a huge failure, one with much broader implications. The next administration will inherit the problem, regardless.

24:16.

Approved for Release