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

(USA)

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

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CG's Office, Al Faw Palace, Victory Base Camp

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

MNFI Historian

Abstract

(b)(3), (b)(6) initially served with LTG (Ret) Sanchez in 1990-1991, at Benning and in Saudi Arabia, when (b)(3), (b)(6) commanded 72nd Engineer Company (Mech) and Sanchez was commanding 2-69 Armor. In April/May 2003, he was commanding 70th Engineers with 1AD, and the movement from Kuwait to Baghdad was very difficult. They were getting organized in northwest Baghdad. The insurgency was starting. An IED killed two American soldiers, and (b)(3), (b)(6) helped clean up the scene. He became the Pol-Mil to Sanchez in early July '03 after his command. The enemy situation was strange. The weather was hot. We had to build out own infrastructure. In the summer of '03, Sanchez was struggling to build a robust strategic staff from a strapped Corps staff, and violence escalated almost vertically. All the planning CJTF-7 and the CPA was extremely short-term, assuming Iraqis would take over all the work by January '04. How anyone thought that was possible is beyond him.

20:29.

Interview

Background.

In 2002-2003, I was the commander of the 70th Engineer Brigade in the 1st Armored Division. From July '03 to July '04, I was the Pol-Mil for LTG Sanchez in CJTF-7. I then went to the Army War College at Carlisle. From July '05 to March '06 I was the Chief of the National Reconstruction Center in the Gulf Region Division in the IZ. I then commanded the 1st Engineer Brigade at Ft. Leonardwood Missouri.

When did you first meet LTG Sanchez?

I met him in May '90 at Ft. Benning when I took command of the 72nd Engineer Company (Mech), which was a separate company. LTC Sanchez was the commander of 2-69 Armor, a highly select position as the separate battalion in the Sledgehammer Brigade of the XVIII Airborne Corps. It was large and robust for an initial insertion.

In the 1st week of August, Iraq invaded Kuwait, and we deployed as the third brigade for the 24th Infantry Division. We went to Ft. Stewart in the 2nd week of August, did training and integration, and by early September were at the port of Dahram, then the desert where we established the brigade operating area.

LTC Sanchez was a great battalion commander.

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We integrated into 2-69 well, but then got pulled from 2-69 and sent over to (b)(3), (b)(6) (b)(3), (b)(6) 1-18 Infantry. We were in the left hook that attacked to Nasiriyah. 2-69 wound up in the second echelon and we lost contact with one another. At Nasiriyah, we took down a Special Forces regiment. Sanchez took Tallil. Anyone who worked for Sanchez found it was tough keeping up with him because his tactical expertise was so superior.

8:00 His sole focus was preparing soldiers for combat and ensuring every day that you had done everything you could that day to train, prepare, and equip soldiers for war.

Describe how 1AD got to Baghdad in 2003.

9:00 MG Sanchez took command of 1 AD in 2001, or maybe '02., I think.

10:20. He was highly respected. They would not have put him in that position as the CJTF-7 commander if he was not highly regarded. He took command in June of '03 and assumed command of CJTF-7 on 15 July. I joined him on 10 July when I gave up command of 70th Engineers in Baghdad. He knew that I was one of his battalion commanders. We had hooked up at Camp Pennsylvania in April of '03.

What was it like getting to Baghdad from Pennsylvania?

11:35. That was the movement from hell. We did some prep in Kuwait and we impatiently waited to move forward into Iraq. 3ID and the Marines have taken Baghdad. They are waiting to be relieved in place by 1st Armored Division and 4th Infantry Division and so on. As a matter of fact, 1st Armored Division relieved 3rd Infantry Division in Baghdad, and my brigade relieved the Hammer brigade, 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division (Ft. Benning), which was the same brigade I had served in in Desert Storm. So we relieved them in place in end of April or early May, and we assumed control of their AO, which was northwest Baghdad. We did a 36 hours movement from Kuwait to Baghdad, and it was across desert and then up the Iraqi highways once we got up north of Basra. It was an interesting movement. Things at that time were very unsettled. There was some small arms fire in various places, but nothing to speak of as we moved in and relieved the 3rd ID. Then, I really lost . . . we were establishing our AO in northwest Baghdad at the time and conducting assessments of the infrastructure, conducting base hardening missions, spreading out into forward operating bases, task force size, in NW Baghdad. During this time, there were discussions going on about how ORHA, LTG (Ret) Garner had set up, how that was going to operate. I think there was an understanding that that was not going to be the model they would use in Iraq. Then Ambassador Bremer came in and Sanchez was tagged to be the CG of CJTF-7. He changed command very quickly and was probably promoted at the same time and took over CJTF-7. Then three weeks later, approximately, on 10 July, I joined him, and I was shocked at the mission he was given and the lack of resources he was given to execute that mission.

15:25. The situation was that American and coalition forces were establishing themselves in their areas of operation throughout Iraq, 101st in the north, 4th ID north of Taji, 1AD all around Baghdad, the Marines south around Hillah, the British down in Basra, and the Poles had not arrived but they were inbound and would be given a division AO. 3rd

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ACR was given the entire Al Anbar Province. 3ID understood that it would be leaving very quickly, once relieved in place. A couple of their brigades were extended and went out to Fallujah and Ramadi, and then eventually they took off, and the 82nd came in and took over those areas from the 3rd ID.

16:30. The enemy situation was really strange at that time. There was sort of a pause while we established ourselves and the Iraqis were making a determination, I think, in very small groups, of how they were going to be treated, of what was the future, of what was their future with our presence there, and there was some violence out in the Sunni areas initially when some US forces were attacked, or believed they were under attack, and there were some skirmishes in the Ramadi area.

What would you say about either the terrain or climate?

17:30. It was an extremely, it was an unbelievably hot summer. It was over 100° every day, and that actually started in Kuwait, it was that way, it was just . . . spring ended early I think that year, and it was in the 90s and 100s when we were in Camp Pennsylvania in April of '03. That summer was pretty miserable. When we arrived in Baghdad, there were no facilities, everything had been looted. There was no copper wiring, no plumbing, no nothing in the areas where we established our FOBs. With the exception of having structures to live in, there was infrastructure to support them, no electricity, no plumbing, no nothing, so we were pretty much living the way we always had, just not in tents, so we built everything, all the facilities, from the ability to do laundry to the ability to take a shower. We had to build all that ourselves, obviously. My engineers went out, and our freedom of movement at that time was broad. We could go into the neighborhoods and into the power stations without any threat of being attacked really, and that was in the May-June time frame, and even into July.

19:28. In the second part of June, that's when we started seeing the attacks, and the first IEDs were used. I don't know if their first use was in NW Baghdad, but the first one we had in the division was in our brigade AO in NW Baghdad. In fact, the first one that I observed was my sergeant major and I were racing through the streets of Baghdad en route to one of our company areas, and about an hour before, a team had been hit by an IED. We didn't realize it was an IED at the time, but they had been hit. There were two KIA in that ambush, and there were several wounded. My sappers were the first to the scene and they secured the scene along with some infantrymen from the task force from 82nd that had been task organized with 3rd Brigade, 1st AD, and we came upon that scene and got out to assist. It was a pretty brutal scene because the driver of that vehicle, and I was told it was a . . . well I won't go into what type of a unit it was, but . . . wasn't one of our units that was hit, and there were brains splattered in the median of the highway, and we went in and picked up what we could . . . and put the parts in MRE bags and plastic bags and then sent them over to the FOB to be re-united with the soldiers' bodies, so . . . but that was the first real . . . my first . . . encounter with . . . I mean we had had RPG attacks on our FOB and we had had some other things, but that was the first in a long time where I had . . . in which I had . . . first event where we really saw some bloodshed. We were out doing patrols every night during those days and securing

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neighborhoods and we were doing squad level patrols, all my sappers were, and they were task organized with armor and infantry task forces throughout NW Baghdad.

22:00 But when I . . . after I changed command in early July and joined LTG Sanchez, we saw a distinct and almost vertical increase in violence between the end of July and the fall of '03, and LTG Sanchez was strapped with doing his . . . his political and diplomatic responsibilities with the Ambassador and with the Iraqi authorities, and Maj Gen Wodjakowski as his Deputy Corps Commander being the warfighter, and to realize that that CJTF-7 evolved into MNFI and MNCI in April of '04, but if you look at what he was struggling with in the summer and fall of '03 and the fact that Army-DOD made a decision in early '04 to create two commands, then you can understand the complexity and the problems he was faced with. He was faced with fighting and doing the diplomatic piece with the Corps staff, and all through the late summer and fall of '03, he struggled to put together the robust staffs that could support a diplomatic effort, a nation-building effort, a war fighting effort, a you-name-it effort to try to contain the violence and, of course, as I said, this violence is escalating vertically, I mean it is almost a vertical climb in the escalation of violence. And he is struggling to understand what is going on and to put together the systems to address this, the C2, the C3, the C4, robust staffs that could support his effort that I believe was much different than envisioned when he was given the position of CJTF-7.

24:45. My distinct [impression], and I don't think it should come as a surprise, is . . . I think he was supposedly going to be a caretaker commander with CJTF-7 and Ambassador Bremer to shepherd the installation of what we thought were mature Iraqi systems to take over the country and . . . to take it wherever it was going to go, and that our effort there was to be . . . I hate the term 'caretaker' . . . but an overseer of the process until the Iraqi systems would come back into play with the right people doing the right things.

Given that LTG Sanchez was supposed to hand off the baton to the Iraqis quickly, and it was temporary, US forces were on the way out, not in. The logistics were supposed to be temporary, so they did not calculate a need to support 100K troops in Iraq.

26:00. Right, that's true.

Can you put substance to that?

26:10. It is interesting. When Ambassador Bremer showed up, you know, USAID was there, and he had his . . . he established . . . he understood the lines of operation, governance, economy, the rule of law, security, and so on. I think there were six or seven lines of operation that he understood that we had to have a plan for in order to move forward. And I'll give him that much credit. He had a vision, and he understood that there had to be people in charge to develop plans for those lines of operation and then a rapid transition to Iraqi authority. And to give you an idea . . . and in fact, I think it was mostly military planners who helped each of the chiefs of the . . . each of those lines of operation . . . develop the long-range plan for each of the lines of operation that fit into Ambassador Bremer's, LTG Sanchez's, CENTCOM's, Sec Def's vision for Iraq, but the

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interesting thing is that the duration of their thinking ended in January of '04, so when we did those plans in July of '03, they were thinking that six months later, things would be back to normal and we would be moving out of there. That's the way it came across to me. And when I looked at the plans that they came up with, they only took us out six months, and they had unrealistic timelines of when Iraqi capacity would be in place to assume command and . . . or to assume control and management of each of these, so we underestimated the capabilities of the Iraqis and the infrastructure that they had in place to take over each of these lines . . . especially when you made decisions such as disbanding the Army and de-Ba'athification, so all the while that Bremer is making these decisions and coming out with edicts that de-Ba'athification will extend to all members of the Ba'ath party and that the armed forces will be disbanded, and oh by the way, we told every Iraqi citizen that they can have an AK-47 at the same time. So, how they thought that the Iraqis would be ready to take over those institutions, all of their ministries, and the defense and security of the country, when we had just disbanded the very apparatus that had been running it for the past thirty-five years is beyond me, but that's what we did. 29:29.

[After the interview, (b)(3), (b)(6) said 3rd ID had "stacked arms" after the regime fell].

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