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

(USA)

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

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

MNFI Historian

Abstract

After the surge and other factors led to security improvements in 2007, the political drama in the GoI reflected a fragile struggle for dominance. Maliki survived challenges thanks to clear American support and he cut deals to retain power. The Basra PIC reflected British drawdown priorities, but it left Basra in the hands of JAM. PIC meant we lost visibility on developments in Basra. Speaker Mashadani has emerged as a great Iraqi legislator. Basra was a serious problem and Mohan was developing a plan for it. PM Maliki determined to act now, and the Army followed, effectively, with our help. There were great problems, and the ISF and the CF worked through them. Maliki is showing himself to be a strong national leader. The PLANORD was central to developing the way forward and the April testimony, which went much better than September's because it had a better focus on agreement on the facts. The current confrontation between the GoI and JAM is the defining moment for Iraq's future, and Maliki is doing well. 50:40.

I previously interviewed (b)(3), (b)(6) in Baghdad in October 2003 while he was a brigade commander. That taped interview is on file at the Center of Military History. (b)(3), (b)(6) has a book coming out this summer titled (b)(3), (b)(6) about his command time here.

Before the interview began, we discussed various issues. He recommended getting out on battlefield circulation with the Kagans when they come from 27 May to 6 June. He also described various valuable historical resources, including the CG's Master Calendar, the IO update, the IO Task Force, and material done by a contractor from the UK. Other valuable documents include notes from the MCNC, the PM, the I-ESC, State cables, the CASB, the Commanders' Conference, and the Iraq Conference.

Interview

1) When I arrived in December, I was taken aback by the melodrama of Iraqi political parties alternately supporting and undermining Maliki. Can you explain the flow of these machinations?

1:20. As security improved in Baghdad and elsewhere throughout 2007, Iraqi politicians understood the competition for power and resources would play out in the political realm. They were jostling for position to come out on top in that struggle. There was great dissatisfaction with the Maliki government. Most political parties thought he was ill-served by his Dawa party and highly sectarian advisors that he surrounds himself with,

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that he had a very exclusive leadership style, did not include others in his decision making and didn't consult them, and so even though there was a veneer of democracy, the country was being run in a very undemocratic manner. This is what the other parties thought. There was a movement led primarily by the Kurds to unseat Maliki, and it led to the presentation of a letter from, I think Prime Minister Barzani of the KRG, but it could have been a variety of people signing that letter. I don't remember who signed it, but it might have been the PUK and the KDP parties. It said, basically, that Maliki had to reform his style of governing. Otherwise, the . . . he'd lose the support that he had enjoyed thus far. It was a not-so-veiled threat to call for a vote of no confidence and install a new Prime Minister. That letter was in late December, but there were a lot of maneuverings leading up to it. Maliki was skating on thin ice. He did not have a lot of support, and he was overplaying his hand, as Prime Minister, in terms of his ability to fill open cabinet seats with members of his party, which he tried to do this spring, to put forth more hard-line positions in terms of various pieces of legislation. For example, he introduced his own version of a de-Ba'athification bill which was more hard line than the compromise draft that had been agreed to back in August. So, this kind of overplaying of his hand resulted in pushback, in a big way, and I would say that we, and I mean the leadership of MNFI, were unsure that he would survive as Prime Minister. But he did survive, mainly due to the steadfast support of the U.S. government, which never signaled to other parties that we would be willing to entertain an alternative . . . and a big part of that is that it would have been easy to engineer a vote of no-confidence. It would have been very, very difficult to vote a new Prime Minister into power, because the number of votes required for the two things are very different. There was a lot of opposition to Maliki, but not a lot of support coalescing around a single replacement figure. Probably the most likely replacement would have been VP Abdul al-Mehdi of the Islamic Supreme Council for Iraq (ISCI), but he didn't enjoy universal support. So the last thing we wanted was a big period of turmoil in which there was no government, much like the period in early 2006 after national elections, when Jafari was on the way out but there was no prime minister on the way in, and we had a four-month period in which there was no government, and chaos in the streets. So, the US government did signal its support for Maliki. I think the Secretary of State did visit about then, and made comments that Maliki enjoyed our full support. But in return, out of the public eye, Maliki was told in no uncertain terms that he needed to work with other parties to move legislation forward, and that our support was not unconditional. To his credit, he did move legislation forward. He did start cutting deals across sectarian lines, which was badly needed. And he survived politically.

2) Can you explain the British PIC of Basra in 2007?

8:10. A steadfast and long-lived British desire to turn Basra back over to Iraqi control. The British had conducted a series of operations in 2006. I think it was the Sinbad series of operations, around 18 of them or something like that, in which they had done cordon & searches of various parts of Basrah, in which they were trying to establish conditions whereby the Iraqi police and security forces down there could take charge. But, over the course of 2007, the British basically withdrew from the city, except for Basra Palace and the airfield. They did not leave a sustainable situation. The police forces and the Iraqi Army forces that were in the city were highly infiltrated by Jaish al-Mehdi militia. The result was constant indirect fire, against British positions at the palace primarily but also

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against the airfield. And that . . . that led to a British desire to turn Basra palace back over to Iraqi control. In the British view, the problem was the presence of coalition forces, not necessarily a competition among the Iraqis for control of Basra. So, in their view, if the coalition forces were to just leave and turn over everything to the Iraqis, all would be well. So Basra Palace was turned over to the Iraqis in August 2007. That did lead to, obviously, the cessation of indirect fire against that location but more to the point, the British commanders argued that were we to release . . . I think its (b)(6) . . . I know (b)(6) is the last name . . . a Jaish al-Mehdi leader who was in our detention facilities, that this leader could enforce a ceasefire of sorts among JAM elements down in Basra. So General Petraeus agreed to his release along with the release of three other individuals. and the British cut a deal with these elements, in conjunction with their Iraqi counterparts, like General Mohan, and Maj Gen Jalil, the police chief down there, which was pretty much a live and let live agreement. You don't attack us; we won't attack you; all will be well. Well, all was not well, as JAM gradually sucked the life out of the city by getting control of various neighborhoods, by getting control of the port of Umm Qasr, by shaking down the citizenry, and being their usual JAM selves. We ended up PICing Basra Province, I think in October.¹ And for awhile it seemed like that was okay, like the Shia factions would come to some sort of power-sharing agreement among themselves and that some sort of a balance of power would emerge, which is what the British hoped. But ultimately, that strategy failed, and the result was that Prime Minister Maliki wound up executing Operation Charge of the Knights in March of 2008 to resolve that situation.

There were news reports of growing violence in the city, of scores of women being executed in the streets for religious violations of one sort or another. Did you have any visibility on reports of that nature?

12:40. No, and this goes to the heart of the problem of PICing provinces. We lose visibility as to what is going on there, and this lack of visibility is an on-going problem for us. What General Petraeus has reinforced, as we go forward here, is the need, even though we turn areas over to Iraqis, is to keep elements in contact that can provide visibility and also provide access for the Iraqis to coalition assets, such as airpower and logistics. So you might pull a brigade's worth of troops out of Kirkuk, for example, but you leave the brigade's headquarters there. Or you pull out all troops, but you keep a couple of ODA teams there, or you keep the MiTTs there with the Iraqi military. And these small elements are high payoff because they provide visibility as to what is going on and they strengthen the Iraqi units both morally and physically. But no, we didn't have very good visibility of what was going on in Basra, other than the press reports.

3) Can you explain the wheeling and dealing that went into the accountability and justice legislation and the trifecta of the 2008 budget, the amnesty, and the provincial powers law, and the drama that went into it?

14:20. The key here, I'm convinced, is Speaking Mashadani. From his beginnings as what we viewed as a highly sectarian politician, he has really morphed into an Iraqi leader in very sense of the word, a Tip O'Neill kind of figure, who cuts deals, who keeps legislation moving forward, who really is an Iraqi and has Iraqi interests at heart. And I

¹ PIC refers to Provincial Iraqi Control, an awkward process of restoring local sovereignty.

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think it was his decision that this legislation would not fail that kept it alive. There was a lot of debate and dissension and contention over these pieces of legislation. It is hard. Iraq is not a very unified country at present. There is a great deal of competition among ethnic and sectarian groups for power and resources, and I think that Speaker Mashadani realized that the only way to cut a deal was to group the three pieces of legislation and have a single vote on them, and that way everyone got a piece of what they wanted while no one faction got everything they wanted. They would disagree on voting individual pieces of legislation one by one because the fear was the first one that was voted, the party that got the most out of that piece would then stiff the other two parties by voted no on what they most wanted. So this was the angst, in what order they would vote them, and it was Mashidani's astute observation that if they lumped them all together, they could get a single up or down vote with most of what everyone wanted in them, and that carried the day.

4) Now back to Basra. From January through March, MNFI voiced support for General Mohan and tried to reinforce his planning efforts in Basra. At the same time, the CG asked some questions about what impact Mohan and his deal making were having on Basra. What was going on in Basra through mid-March, how was Mohan handling it, and how were MNFI, the USMI, and the GoI approaching the problem?

17:00. Well, you need to remember that Basra was not real high on our list of priorities. We always viewed AQI as the wolf closest to the sled with Baghdad as the center of gravity of the campaign. For most of 2007, Baghdad and its belts were the focus of the campaign in order to create the space and time needed to move forward politically, which after all is the key line of operation and the key to eventually ending the conflict. When Baghdad was largely secured, the war moved north. And there was Anbar, but Anbar had been pretty much secured by the summer of '07. The war moved north, and there were large battles being fought for Baquba, which had become a center of AQI resistance and the breadbasket north of there. That was the scene of some bitter fighting in the summer of 07. Then the war pushed further north to Mosul, the last AQI urban stronghold. So that was our focus, securing Baghdad, kicking AQI out of their strongholds, and then pursuing them with the ultimate goal of eliminating them as an organized presence in Iraq. Basra, again, was not high on our priority list. It was always something that would always have to be dealt with eventually, but not now. But our priorities were not necessarily the Prime Minister's priorities. We, through the UK and MND-SE, supported Mohan and Jalil in their attempts to bring some sort of control over the city. General Petraeus thought this would be a kind of slow deal. The key was for General Mohan and Jalil to create a few really good, highly trained units that were willing to fight, and then slowly expand on that by taking down key enemy leaders, taking control of key parts of the city, and then expanding their control, the number of quality forces, almost the oil spot theory applied to a single city. This would also entail the least expenditure of resources, both Iraqi and coalition, so that we could focus on what we thought the main efforts were, which Baghdad and Mosul. This came to a head in March . . .

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5) Can you recount the events of 23 to 30 March. On Thursday and Friday, 20 and 21 March, General Mohan briefed his plan, and PM Maliki found it inadequate.

20:27. You actually have to back up about ten days. General Mohan, with British backing, came to Baghdad in an effort to secure resources, to execute a plan for gaining control of Basra over a 90 to 120 day period. It entailed getting more reinforcements sent to Basra, securing the border with Iran; it entailed positioning more outposts within Basra and better arms and equipment for his forces, and a slow squeeze on militias and their activities within the city. General Petraeus held a big meeting with General Mohan over at the Blackhawk Convention Center. It was over dinner, an Arabic-style dinner that we served. It began with General Mohan for about an hour briefing his plan and then taking questions, and then the conversation flowed into dinner. The upshot was . . . well, in attendance was National Security Advisor Rubaie who co-chaired the meeting with General Petraeus. Others attending included the representative from the Ministry of Defense, I think his deputy was there, the Minister of the Interior or his representative was there. We have the minutes from this meeting. On the coalition side, we had all the key players, General Austin, STRATOPS, the embassy. I don't remember if the Ambassador was here. This meeting was around 7 March. And General Faruq from OCINC was there. So the upshot from the meeting was that General Petraeus and Rubaie agreed to form a committee consisting of LTG Dubik, who was also there, General Mohan of course, and actually the committee was Dubik and Faruq from OCINC (The Office of the Commander in Chief). And those two, Dubik and Faruq, would get together and figure out which parts of the plan could be resourced without totally unhinging the modernization and the ISF expansion that was going on. So they worked this over a period of ten days or so. And then on Thursday, 20 March, there was the follow on dinner, at which the committee was going to report out and determine what to resource or not. In the meantime, I think the Prime Minister got word, I think, through General Faruq and others, I mean, we weren't trying to hide anything, that this was going on, and he did not agree with the approach. He did not agree that it would take 90 to 120 days to secure Basra. He wanted to do it more rapidly. And I'm not sure what intel he was being fed, and what reports, and what calculations he made that this had to be done much faster. But he clearly recognized, in his mind, an existential threat to his government, in Basra. He called General Petraeus, and through me and Sadi, we worked a meeting where the Prime Minister asked General Petraeus to come to the Presidential Palace. This was Friday morning, 21 March, at 1100. So they'd had this [Thursday evening] dinner and they report out the plan, and that evening the Prime Minister called a meeting for the next day. General Petraeus had had plans to travel on Friday, so I had to change them. General Petraeus goes with others on Friday morning to brief the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister said "I'm sending reinforcements to Basra, and I'm going with them." [laughter] And this was completely uncoordinated with coalition forces. It was an Iraqi initiative. And the good news is . . . they took it upon themselves to plan something, however haphazardly, and they were able to move the forces down there, which was a feat in itself. I don't think they would have been able to do that a year earlier. So, even though people slam the Basra operation as being haphazard, and there were problems with it, I think it shows the growth of the ISF and engage in combat. Yeah some of the forces failed, but some of them didn't. Most of them didn't. Most of them fought ok.

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Some of them fought really well. And they made it stick. They eventually forced JAM to retreat, and that has not been widely recognized. So anyway, over the course of that week forces went down to Basra. The Prime Minister went down, and then the Charge of the Knights began.

How great was the level of anxiety over the operation in that last week of March?

27:25. Well, we clearly were going to support Prime Minister Maliki, because it is a sovereign country and it was his decision to go down there. But we also recognized, in a typical Iraqi fashion [laughter], they really did not have really solid planning going into the operation. So what General Petraeus made sure . . . as this operation unfolded, was that we supported them in every way we could. He got logistics flowing through Corps and through MNSTCI. He sent transition team advisors down there to get visibility on what was going on. At one point, I think a battalion of the 82nd Airborne Division went down there to lighten the effort, not necessarily in direct combat, but in a partnering role to gain visibility on what was going on. And all of these elements also brought links to coalition air power with them. He sent attack helicopters down there on the Prime Minister's request. He sent the Corps TAC CP down there with Maj Gen Flynn (USMC) down there and RDML Winters, the head of the Counter Terrorism Transition Team, as an LNO to the Basra Operational Command. As we slowly gained insight into what was happening on the streets, we were able to assist the Iraqis in providing resupply to their units down there. Initially, they'd been sent down there without adequate provision for food and ammunition and water, and so there was some catch period to work those issues, but the Iraqi Air Force flew many, many sorties on their C-130s to get provisions down there, to fly reinforcements down there. As the logistics got better, and the units started to acclimate to combat down there in the city, they started to do better. The Iraqi Army probably was not good enough on its own to take down some of these neighborhoods, where JAM had fairly strong positions, and lots of heavy weapons, IEDs, and so forth, and the Jaish al-Mehdi Special Groups and the normal militia would mortar Basra Palace, so the Prime Minister was mortared and his chief of security was killed, so the Prime Minister was personally invested in this, and he continued to call for reinforcements. He called for reinforcements from Anbar province and other parts of Iraq, and finally put enough forces down there and there was enough support for them that militarily he could make some headway. Now, we didn't think he could make very rapid headway, but what changed was the political environment, as other Iraqi parties saw that the Prime Minister was not going to back down, and that this was going to be a defining moment in the conflict against Jaish al-Mehdi, and they coalesced around the Prime Minister, and it became everyone ganging up on the Sadrists, both politically and militarily. And this isolated the Jaish al-Mehdi from OMS support, and ultimately, the Sadrists saw that they were going to lose this conflict down there if they continued this operation down there. And I'm not sure, I mean we can't divine, what goes on behind the veiled curtain of their decision making, but sometime in April they decided to cut their losses in Basra, and at least their leadership moved out. When that happened, the rank and file decided they weren't going to fight anymore. And as of today, the Iraqi Security Forces have control of every neighborhood in Basra, every neighborhood. So in one month, the Prime Minister changes every political dynamic in Basra and ultimately changes the entire

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political dynamic in Iraq as a whole, and this is what is playing out now in Baghdad as a result.

Since 2003, I have thought that any outcome in Iraq that we might regard as success depends first on Iraqis embracing it as their victory, first and foremost, not something that they have been handed by the coalition.

32:54. Yes, that is very true. I really believe that, in 2004, when Jaish al-Mehdi rose up in the spring, that we had the military capability to defeat them. In fact, we did. We defeated them in Karbala, in Najaf, and Sadr City, and we could have made it stick. The problem was that we had very little Iraqi political support, and the mantra among the politicians was "just let Muqtada al-Sadr and his advisors into the political process and all will be well." You know, we'll be able to temper their harsher instincts through political discourse and giving them a share of power. Well, what happened was that they let them into the system, but the Jaish al-Mehdi never dissolved their militia. And so you had a Hezbollah-like political party in Iraq with an armed capability, which in the long run is detrimental to the state, and it would lead eventually to the Lebanonization of Iraq if left unchecked, and Prime Minister Maliki realizes this. We realized it as well. I mean General Petraeus has said all along that ultimately, the long-term issue for Iraqis to handle is the Shia militias, and once AQI was defeated, that attention would have to be turned to defeating them. The state must have a monopoly on organized force, that is clear. And Prime Minister Maliki is determined that now is the time that that is the case. Quite frankly, I admire him for it.

Can you explain the preparations for the April testimony?

35:20. It really begins in December, when we had inklings that Central Command was going to issue a PLANORD to MNFI to begin planning for what comes next after the surge. CENTCOM's initial salvo on this, if you will, was something to the effect of "Tell us how to get down to ten brigades by January of 2009." When we, we as in the Iron Colonels of the MNFI staff, (b)(3), (b)(6) me and others, learned through our sources at Central Command, (b)(3), (b)(6) the head of the Commander's Action Group at CENTCOM and (b)(3), (b)(6) Admiral Fallon's Executive Officer, that this was going to be the wording in this PLANORD, we pushed back really, really hard, and said that CENTCOM should not be so prescriptive on the outcome without knowing what the problem was. What happened is sometime in December or early January, Admiral Fallon took one of his monthly trips out to Iraq, and the four of us, (b)(3), (b)(6) and I got together on the patio of the JVB, and we had a near-beer and smoked a cigar and we talked about how CENTCOM could best word this PLANORD such that there would be cooperation between MNFI and CENTCOM in its development and not competition as there had been the previous summer when we were developing the testimony for September of '07, in which case . . . in that case, CENTCOM and MNFI had developed competing visions of what the future would look like. So, what the four of us agreed would be the best way to word the PLANORD would be "Tell us what the goal and the mission is and describe the various conditions under which we envision that mission being carried out. In other words, are things going along pretty much like they are now, have conditions deteriorated, or have conditions improved, and then tell us what force structure and what your plan would be in each of those alternative futures. They

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went back to Tampa and socialized that with the leadership back there, and the result was that that was the way the PLANORD was written and issued, and actually it was very, very good. It received no push back from MNFI, because we were not being told "Get down to 10 brigades by X date." We were told "how many . . . [or] what do you need and what sort of strategy would you pursue in order to achieve this goal given this set of prevailing conditions. And that is a pretty reasonable way to go about planning. General Petraeus realized that was a pretty reasonable way, and I think Admiral Fallon realized that as well. So over the course of January and February, the MNFI staff wrestled with planning for this. General Petraeus held meetings twice a week with all the Force and Corps planners. There was a single planning effort, with all the Force and Corps planners merged into one planning team, with Maj Gen Robeson of SPA in charge. Ultimately, it resulted in the brief that we gave to the Central Command Commander, the Joint Chiefs, the SECDEF and the President. It was a couple of different briefings. Actually it was three different briefings, actually four different briefings; I'm a little fuzzy now. Obviously we talked to Admiral Fallon about it first, then the Joint Chiefs, then the SECDEF, and then the President, so there might have been four briefings in there. And that resulted in the recommendation that the President ultimately approved, and that we briefed to Congress, that the drawdown would temporarily . . . after the drawdown of the surge forces, that there would be a period of evaluation and re-assessment, which we agreed would be 45 days, and then we would continue draw downs as conditions permitted beyond that date. In reality, the assessment would be continuous. It is not like we would stop assessing, but what the 45 days allowed us to do was to let the dust settle after the last surge forces departed and to see what the impact of the force structure of 15 BCTs . . . see what impact it would have on the local situation here in Iraq.

41:30. I must say, by the way, that by the end of all that PLANORD process . . . Admiral Fallon and General Petraeus were completely of one mind on the way forward, and there was . . . you know, ironically, in the same month that Admiral Fallon resigns as the CENTCOM Commander because of various press articles, and what not, that the press hinted that one of the problems was that he and General Petraeus differed on the strategy and the way ahead for Iraq, and therefore the President did not have full faith and confidence in Admiral Fallon any longer, but that was not the case. It might have been the case in the summer, as we led up to the September testimony, as Admiral Fallon had a separate group of thinkers put together to divine an alternative strategy for Iraq, as there was more jostling, if you will, over what would be presented to Congress, but there was really no discord by the end of the process by March.

In some interview, General Petraeus said he and Admiral Fallon have been on the same sheet of music for six months, so maybe that is the September testimony.

42:47. That is correct. After September, they got on the same page, but up to September they were not on the same page, at least not completely. There was some give and take there.

What was your impression of the April testimony?

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43:25. I thought the April testimony was conducted better by all sides than the September testimony. I think a lot of that was the result of what was happening here on the ground in Iraq. For one thing, there was at least universal accolade for the honorable service of Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus and the people that they led, and that was recognized by the politicians. So there were no moveon.org ads and other crap being thrown into the milieu. The second thing was that there was some agreement that the surge, and other factors in Iraq, had created better conditions on the ground, had improved conditions, especially in terms of sectarian violence. So, if you had pretty much universal agreement on those things, then you could have a legitimate discussion about what the policy should be, and there was some pretty good questioning and give and take on various options and what it all meant, on whether the progress was just tactical but had no strategic relevance, or whether this was truly a strategic breakthrough and I thought that was good. You can have a discussion if there is some agreement on the facts. But in September, there was . . . the "willing suspension of disbelief" type comments that make it difficult to discuss the outlines of a future policy if you don't agree on what is happening. So in that sense, I thought the April testimony was much better done by all the committees. And I thought it was fine. Now, there was the usual grandstanding by some people, and of course there were the Presidential politics that came in to play, but that was all to be expected, and I think everyone took it in stride.

What are the key factors that must figure into policy making and operational and strategic decision-making in May 2008?

45:58. I think the most important thing happening right now is the competition between the government and the Sadrists over whether the Jaish al-Mehdi should be disarmed or not. I think this is really a defining moment for the government of Iraq. It has called for the dissolution of JAM as an organized military force, and if it can make that stick, then I think this country will hold together. I think we have largely defanged Al Qaeda in Iraq. We haven't destroyed it. It still has capability to conduct horrific acts of violence, but it is not the force it was 18 months ago. Its sanctuaries have been all but eliminated. It has some left up in MND-North, but we're pursuing the enemy up there. But if Jaish al-Mehdi continues to exist as an organized body, then future elections will never be fair, because it means people are being coerced by militia to vote in certain ways. It means certain areas of the country, like Sadr City, Al Amarah, Maysan Province, will continue to be controlled by an extra-military force outside of government control. And if that continued, then it could lead to the breakup of Iraq and the Lebanonization of the country. This is clearly a key strategic development, and I would agree that Prime Minister Maliki to solve it. He appears to have the intestinal fortitude not to back down, and we will see what the outcome will be.

For the five years I've been working on Iraq, I've continuously heard senior leaders say, regardless of the policy or operation, all of our efforts and the support we provided to Iraq ultimately depended on how Iraqis responded to determine success or failure. Are the Prime Minister's efforts what we've been looking for?

48:30. Absolutely. He has finally . . . in fact he has gone beyond that. He has not only filled in behind coalition forces as we do something, he is actually planning his own

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operations. He is deciding what the priorities are and what his forces will do, and then he is asking for coalition support for those priorities. And this is exactly what we've been asking Iraqis to do for five years, is to take control. And it just amazes me that some people see what Maliki is doing now as being somehow sectarian or somehow jostling for political strength in the upcoming provincial elections, or some other nefarious thought, when in fact it is the government deciding that it is time to take control of organized force within Iraq. Any government would want to do that. Again, Maliki has grown in office, and he has clearly become a very strong leader, and that is the kind of leader that people in this area of the world admire. Arabs admire strong leaders, and he is turning into one, and were he to back down now, against JAM, it would probably be the end of his administration. The sharks would smell blood in the water and would circle and there would be calls for votes of no confidence and we would be back to December of '07. So, again, I think if you step back and look at this from a longer term perspective, this will be a defining moment, one way or the other, in a unified Iraq that can govern itself and defend itself and care for its own people once it has the security situation in the country in its power to control.

50:40.

Approved for Release