

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

Where do we stand, in late July 2008, on critical issues like the US-Iraq relationship and provincial elections legislation.

10:10. On the Strategic Framework Agreement, we've done a lot of work in a short time. The negotiations are keying on language right now, and time horizons, presence, and US forces. It becomes dicey and tricky. PM Maliki has his political requirements. We have to be able to fulfill our mission without having our hands tied. I think we have a fairly good understanding of what needs to be done. It is these more subtle points . . . we have to be careful . . . Everyone agrees on the need for an agreement, and that is important.

On the elections law, there have been some indications that they will broker a deal in the Iraqi council of representatives. It is so unique to see how this is changing the landscape [in Iraq]. I think I'm paraphrasing someone when I say, the process in the CoR is good, there are cracks in it. There is a positive trend that it is going to get somewhere. You have to be patient and see it out, because it will take time.

In order to deal with this situation, what do you wish you knew more about?
I wish I had a better understanding of the subtleties of Iraqi governance and politics, the sheiks, the governors, the operations centers, the Army, the Iraqi Ground Forces Command. There are very intricate relationships and networks here, and I don't know how particular action by, with or against a specific individual will reverberate through the whole. I think time and experience allows you to have some better sense of that.

1.4b, 1.4d

How do you assess risk in the current situation?

Risk management in this situation is really about policy decisions that are on the horizon, that depend on the results of the presidential election. We have something to think about here. We have to balance risks on the armed forces. We have to maintain influence with Iraqis. That is pretty self evident.
21:56.

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~