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

(USA)

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Al Faw Palace, VBC, Baghdad

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

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Abstract

(b)(3), (b)(6) gives a detailed discussion of his time (b)(3), (b)(6) in the 101st in Tikrit in '05 to '06. He explains how the decision to not contest certain roads just made these safe havens for enemy activity. The goal of the September 2007 testimony was to buy time, and we did that. Reconciliation has worked where it has been tried, but not everyone is ready to sign on, including some Marine commanders out west and the GoI government. The GoI is struggling through basic constitutional issues, and Maliki has proved himself a capable political player. General Petraeus has the best conception of information operations (b)(3), (b)(6) has ever seen, and IO is a vital battle ground for the coalition. General Petraeus has a very few confidants who visit him, but his is a lonely position, and what he has done and how he keeps going is remarkable. Transcription priority: low. This transcript is nearly verbatim. It is a very good interview.

Follow-Up Questions:

1. Explain your operations in early February '06, the events surrounding the Samarra mosque bombing, and the immediate aftermath.
2. You've previously mentioned changing your mind about Ambassador Crocker and about President Bush. What else have you changed your mind about this year?
3. What have you learned in this job about policy, strategy, and operations?
4. Describe the documents you think are key, where to find them, proper custody

Question 1: (b)(3), (b)(6) in Tikrit, Oct '05 to Oct '06.

(b)(3), (b)(6) commanded the provisional 2nd Brigade of the 101st Airborne, Band of Brothers. The missions included Counter IED and coordinating EOD. We controlled Iraqi engineers. About 1/3rd of the brigade was Air Force, there were some Navy personnel, and the force included 1850 Army. They experienced the Samarra mosque bombing and the cycle of violence. Their sector was MND-North, comprising all of Salah ad Din, almost all of Diyala, all of Kirkuk or Tamim province, and all of Nineveh provinces, so everything north of Baghdad, and north and east of Anbar province.

4:00. The overall mission was to transition to the Iraqis and develop Iraqi capacity and transition to them while defeating AQI and the insurgency. The engineer mission was to close bases. We closed 57 bases, mostly small, of different sizes, including FOB Danger (Tikrit Palace complex, formerly the 42nd ID HQ), and the Mosul Palace, which was the 101st Airborne and then the 11th ACR. We took pride in the mission and they were succeeding at it, in consolidating bases, despite the metrics on the attack statistics.

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Did you feel the Iraqis were not ready for transition?

When I look back on it now, the attacks statistics in 2006, it all went to hell then, and it was a frog sitting in a pot of water on the stove. It was getting tougher, but we did not recognize any need to change the mission. We shut down complete sections of roads that we did not recognize as being necessary to our mission. We declared them black. No movement on the sections from Samarra to Habaniyah, from Bayji to Haditha, Baqoubah to Baghdad down the east side of the Tigris River, from Tikrit directly on the road to Tuse. We did that because we were getting too many soldiers killed on them for no real material gain. We didn't need them, we figured, so we concentrated on the roads we did need, and we would let the enemy fight where they needed to. Unwittingly, we were creating safe havens for Al Qaeda to use. These recent finds of tunnel complexes along the Samarra road came from 101st declaring the road black.

7:40. We have to bear in mind that in 2006, the main effort was Baghdad. If there was anything the west needed, Anbar got it also. Remember in August of 2006 was when the MNFW G2 famously leaked the classified assessment that Anbar was lost if we stayed on the same course. We were pissed because here we were in MND-North with the same level of attacks, but we then became the combat provider, with us losing battalion after battalion to help MNF-W. Finally, the decision was made that we were not going to even try to keep control of these areas, hence we declared these roads black and abandoned them to the enemy. That has come back to haunt this command. But MND-N is the main effort now, and it is getting the combat power. This is a different resource environment. We were the Economy of Force area in 2006. We turned it over to 25th Infantry Division (Light). They turned it over to First Armored Division. The 25th came in with the same footprint as we had, but still with the economy of force mission in Iraq.

Question 2: Getting the call in January 2007.

In December of '06 and January of '07, there was a litany of bad news and public criticism of the war in DC. Was General Petraeus' call to you to come take this job at that time a 'gut check' for you.

10:20. I don't see a relationship between those events and General Petraeus' call or my response to it. When he asked me to come, I told him, "Sir, I just left." And he said, "a ha," in just that kind of tone, and I knew how much time he had spent over here also. My next fall back position was, "Sir, I'm still in [b 3, b 6]" And he said, "Let me make a phone call." And 48 hours later, I got an email from the Chief of Staff of the Army's office saying [b(3), b(6)] move out smartly." Yeah, that was tough on my family, but there are times in the Army when you asked to do something and you salute and move out smartly. And it has been an honor to come here and serve.

With that in mind, would you have said yes to any general officer?

11:11. I've never served with General Petraeus before. I had to get on the internet and google him to know what he looked like if I walked into a room and he was there. Had it been anybody, General Casey . . . whoever the commander was, and said "I need you to come back and be the Director of my initiative's group." That would be that the Army was calling, and I would have had two options, to resign my commission or pack my bags.

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I felt honored to be called. I talked to my wife. It was extremely tough on my kids. But General Petraeus said "I'm going back and try to do something that many people think can't be done, and I need you on the team to help me do that." And it has been an honor to come back.

Sir, I believe that reflects the ethos of the professional officer.

You would hope so, but I'm not making any claims, but selfless service is one of our values. I could extend and serve longer, and do great, meaningful things, but 24 out of 28 months here in Iraq . . . I need to get back to my family on this one. So I'm taking my leave at the 12-month mark of this deployment. And I realize a lot of people are spending a lot of time over here as well.

Question 2: Goals of the September Testimony.

13:40. He was hoping for time, and he got it. He reviewed the initial trends, and they looked good. Politics is where we have to show more progress. He bought time, and told the Iraqis he bought them six months only. He said he was going back to testify in March (it is now April.) This will be a tough sell. We've seen some progress, some metrics, security continues to be remarkably better by the measured metrics. But they are also fragile, and we have not nearly hit sustainable security yet. JAM could end their ceasefire. The CLC program could not get the satisfaction they're looking for in terms of being brought into the government; they could return to insurgency against the Iraqi government. All this is political. 14b, 1.4d The metrics we measure--attacks on civilians, civilian deaths, IED trends, caches found--all are very positive, and they show security getting better, but we are still not seeing the dynamic revitalization of the government. The JAM ceasefire, they consider it turning the other cheek. You can only do that so long before people say turning the other cheek isn't working and decide to take up arms again. The CLCs or Sons of Iraq, there was a latent promise that the CLCs/SOI was a ticket into legitimate employment of some kind. There was also a promise that if they switch sides, their history would be less a source of potential arrest or harassment. Not blanket amnesty, but a promise they would not be hunted for past activities. I believe, with the CG, that all wars must come to an end, and that only happens by reconciling with your enemies; you don't reconcile with friends. And there is a lot of angst in reconciling with former enemies. The biggest difference between now and 2006, when Gian Gentile wrote that op-ed piece about . . . I did not think it was a well thought out argument. He said "you can't blame my soldiers, we were doing the best . . . " Hey, nobody is blaming soldiers. I had a brigade here in 2006. I had soldiers die, and we were fighting our heart out, but we had the wrong strategy, and that has changed. And the other thing that has changed is that in 2006 we would never have negotiated with insurgent groups and tried to get them on our side. We would have hunted them down. And if they turned themselves into us, we would have detained them. And now, we're fighting alongside, in many areas, former insurgent groups. There was a mental change of mind that began in Ramadi in 2006 with Sean MacFarland. It grew, expanded into Abu Ghraib with (b)(3), (b)(6) who brought the CLC movement into the western outskirts of Baghdad. Then the idea of reconciling with former enemies moved into the Triangle of Death with Yusifiya and (b)(3), (b)(6) then into Baghdad with (b)(3), (b)(6) and Gaziliyah with (b)(6) the former insurgent leader. Then from

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western Baghdad to Adhamiyah, it expanded south to Iskandiriyah, then south to Karbala. The expansion was not ubiquitous. It went up to Ba'qouba this summer, up to Hawijah in the last couple of months. That was the cesspool in MND-North. In Hawijah, there was a FOB McHenry which was a heroic place to stand. I think the 1st of the 317th was the infantry battalion there and I think it got the Presidential Unit Citation for its year in McHenry with the 101st. Today, you can walk through that town.

22:00. The Sahwa movement has expanded because commanders have evolved. But the pushback we are getting with detainee releases, especially out west with some Marines, reflects commanders who have not mentally made that leap to reconciliation. They're calling it 'catch and release' because they're not ready to reconcile and make peace by repatriating former combattants. We know who they are; we've got pledges, and releases are conditional. If the released detainees screw up, it is back for the long-haul. But the commanders are not prepared and have not prepared their troops mentally to end the fighting. This war has to end in a controlled fashion, with careful releases.

Question 3: I've seen a succession of soap opera dramas involving the Gol cabinet and PM Maliki, that he was on the way out, then that he had strengthened his position. How have you adjusted to this topsy-turvy political atmosphere, and do you think you've learned to distinguish serious threats from bluster?

23:36. This whole . . . one of the most fascinating things as a political scientist is politics in Iraq, which is always frustrating, tends to be entertaining from a masochistic point of view. The . . . Maliki was selected to be the PM because he was the safe, compromise candidate. He came from the Dawa Party, which is the small, relatively non-aligned Shia party, much smarter than ISCI and OMS JAM. He was thought to be manipulable. Starting in March through mid-summer 2007, he started emerging as an independent actor, which caught a lot of folks off guard. The Sadrists were the ones who voted for him, so he was thought to be really beholden to them, at least through the March of '06 and early '07. When we gave him clear evidence of JAM SG actions that were undermining the country, he authorized direct action against JAM SGs. He has always been distrustful of ISCI. Their candidate was Abdel Mahdi. It came down to a couple of votes. Mahdi still harbors designs to be in charge, and he would be capable. Still, if there were a government change, he would be the one to take power. The Kurds, deeply frustrated, were pushing hard for a change of government. The US was very studious, listened a lot, but left it to them. When it came to it, ISCI was not willing to pull the trigger. Had ISCI chosen to, they could have pulled the trigger (on Maliki) by combining with the Kurds and probably with large elements of Sunnis who dislike Maliki, and made it happen. I think it did not happen because Sistani withheld his approval for action, and that made ISCI hold off doing something to change the government. So there's been an uneasy second chance. Had great progress when January began, progress has slowed. They are not allowed to go home until they have a budget, but all the Arabs (Shia and Sunni) are lined up against the Kurds' demand for 17% of the budget plus pay for peshmerga. The Kurds have overreached. Their population is probably 13% of the whole country. The peshmerga don't serve GoI, just KRG. We think a compromise will be 17% and no pesh, but that has not come yet.

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28:00. Provincial Powers is a big deal right now. The problem is Dawa is with the Sadrists on this where they want a strong central government, and ISCI is with the Kurds where they want federal state with strong powers to provinces to form federal regions. The Kurds are being very aggressive up north in pushing to expand their control beyond the Green Line, which puts pressure on the Sunnis, who gain sympathy for AQI as an ally against the Kurds, which leads to the fights in Mosul. ISCI was control of the south, and ISCIstan. They want nine provinces; they'll take eight. They want control of the oil. They want control of the religious tourism out of Karbala and Najaf, and believe that is possible. The conflict between central and regional power--it took the United States . . . four-score and seven years. . . to figure that out, we had a civil war over state's rights, and we still didn't figure it out completely. The Iraqis are going through those same throws right now.

Question 4: What is General Petraeus' concept of information operations?

General Petraeus has a much broader view of information operations than most people. First, he sees it as strategic communications. He is a master of this. This is talking to the press, getting your message out there. Our enemy is masterful at information operations for three reasons. First, truth doesn't matter to him. So it doesn't matter to have the story verified and the time that it takes. That allows them to go flash to bang very quickly. Second, they are very savvy on the internet. They share stuff quickly. They have multiple virtual communities that don't actually exist anywhere, but they exist in cyberspace, which allows them to share stories and media quickly and get items out quickly. They also know that their audience is very, very susceptible to conspiracy theories and any story told by a Muslim against a non-Muslim, because the assumption is that the Muslim is telling the truth and the non-Muslim is lying. They understand their audience, the truth doesn't matter, and they understand speed. What General Petraeus has charged his crowd to do is fight that message. Be there first with the truth. Don't wait 24 hours to make it perfect. Go first with what we know. Present the gun tape, show it was not a school, it was a bongo truck with a guys shooting RPGs. He talks to the press because they tell the story, so he is masterful at strategic communications.

32:40. Then you have the information operations

1.4a, 1.4g

1.4a, 1.4g

He is always trying . . we do a ton of good out there. We need to talk to the Iraqis about these thin_s. Then there is the stuff we ut out there all of which is absolutely true,

1.4a, 1.4g

1.4a, 1.4g

We have gotten new authorities in this theater for this conflict, this year that have never been used before in the history of American warfare. And really, the next step, and where we're still not there yet, is in the market place of ideas out there, mostly on Islamic web sites, where they put out absolute rot, and attribute it to the Koran, the whole idea that suicide bombers will get 72 virgins in heaven. And what we're trying to do is convince people that AQI . . . the big tires that they ought to carry around on their head is a bankrupt ideology, this oppressive practices, and indiscriminate violence. If the message was out there and people heard it and understood it, AQI would die on the vine. It survives because it portrays itself as Arab

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audiences as an honorable savior or fighter against crusader occupiers. It is a bankrupt ideology, but we are not yet fighting them fully in the market place of ideas, and that is General Petraeus' big schtick on IO.

On the same subject, which Iraqi leaders get IO, and which ones do not?

35:36. All Iraqi leaders that we interact with, to some degree, if they're educated . . . the PM told us a couple of days ago that the best thing that Saddam did was a literacy campaign in Iraq. And Iraq has always been a font of ideas and education. And the PM, as much as he hated to say anything positive about Saddam, he pointed out if we could only re-establish that, to help people read the Koran themselves. . . our educated interlocutors in the government, gets it, but their illiterate powerbase doesn't get it, and they have to keep appealing to the powerbase in populist terms, and try to slowly turn them, but if they go too far out, they'll lose their constituents. So the ones who most identify with the powerbase are themselves illiterates, the Sadrists, and they're the toughest ones to work with. Their population is the most ardent believer in the disinformation. Literacy will help. The fight against Islamic extremism will take education, and it has no merit on its own when the light shines on it. But it will take decades of illumination to irradicate it, and there is no light shining on it right now because too many folks can not assess for themselves, they just accept what the imam says on Friday prayers or at the madrassas.

Question 5: How critical is Maj Gen Stone's mission at TF 1.4a

39:00. I would say that failure in his mission would get the Republicans thrown out of office electorally. Under Garder, Stone's predecessor, neutral results were judged good, and anything else would have been bad [so bad was the situation, it was a question of success equally avoiding disaster]. So the best that Gardner could hope for was to avoid Abu Ghraibs and riots. Under the old way of doing business, there was no news that could have come out of Camp Bucca that would be good. No news was good news. That was all Gardner hoped for. Now, Bucca is a positive. There are education classes. Imams are teaching literacy and moderate Islam. When these guys go out in releases, they are less susceptible, and the releases are pre-conditions for tribes to cease fighting. What Stone has accomplished has been remarkable, and he has broken an awful lot of glass in doing so, and a lot has to do with the mental readiness to accept a lot of releases. Stone has been a leader in advocating releases, and that has been difficult. West has been most resistant to this. The Marines, besides the fact that they should be the most acceptant given that peace has broken out there, they should be welcoming them back. But they've been very resistant. My view is it is going to get jammed down their throat, so they better adjust quickly because it is coming. We can not get to December 2008 and be holding 24,000 detainees. We don't have the authorities to do it. That would be very problematic, and it gets back to every war has to end. They end with reconciliation between the combattants. We did the same with the Italians in '43.¹ We didn't necessarily trust them, but we did serve . . . we agreed that they were no longer combattants, and we did not throw them all in detention.

(b)(3), (b)(6) told me he had just finished reading the second volume in R. Atkinson's trilogy on the U.S. Army in Europe in World War II.

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42:40. There are many groups we are no longer fighting, like the 1920s Brigade. That means we're not going to throw them all into detention if they come in. It means they've decided not to fight. And we need lasting controls and not a temporary measure that helps them rearm and regroup. The GoI has still not figured out how to end the war. They, the GoI, are surprisingly less . . . they are a lot like the Marines . . . and in order for this war to end, there has to be reconciliation. We hope reconciliation will further lower the level of violence. When people see less violence as the norm, when they see Rule of Law and development, they will further reign in the extremists. Violence is down but not cemented. It is tenuous. It could revert back to war on a large scale. But we could start seeing more progress on the necessary reconciliation.

Can you describe General Petraeus?

45:15. I've spent a lot of time with General Petraeus. I'll just say that the pressures on him are immense. He does not have many people that he can let his hair down with and just enjoy. There've been a couple of visitors who have come that he just enjoys being with. I think he personally enjoys being with, and he'll have dinner with, General Keane and Major General Helmecks, who was one of his ADCs. There are a couple of journalists or think-tankers who he personally enjoys their company, and it is not a burden. It recharges him. There are some meetings he attends that suck the life out of him. These one on ones with people he enjoys charges him back up. Command is extremely lonely, and he is the only four-star in theater. There are not many people he can have a beer with especially with GO 1 in effect. In October, or late September, when (b)(3), (b)(6) and I'd be there at the house, and he would come plop down on the couch in the XO's room and he'd put his feet up and we'd watch some football. He didn't have the patience to watch the whole football game and he is not a particular football fan, but what he just wanted to do . . . and there's only so many books you can read . . . you need some personal time . . . It has been remarkable that his energy level has stayed as high as it has. I attribute it to good exercise, trying to get some good amounts of sleep, and kind of a healthy lifestyle. And I think he also shows the full range of emotions so he doesn't keep it all bottled up. And while he never shows a Schwarzkopf kind of mad or a Macaffrey kind of mad, you can tell when he's upset with something. But that passes quickly. It's out, and the fact that he has been able to sustain this for so long is really remarkable. No general officers that I have met could have done what I've seen him do this year.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I'm just looking forward to seeing my wife and my kids. (48:50)

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