

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

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

8 July 2008

North Ballroom, Embassy Annex, International Zone

By (b)(3), (b)(6)  
MNFI Historian

## Abstract

(b)(3), (b)(6) took over Plans from (b)(3), (b)(6). The PLANORD contemplated three futures; the one that we've seen in Unexpected Success. We have a problem not knowing what our national policy is for the region. We have to move out of the Embassy Annex. We'll do it in three months, and it is important to do. MNFI organization is complicated, and Maj Gen Robeson did not fit what was needed. We are bringing the GoI along and they are on track for full sovereignty. The IDF was a reminder that you're not safe. Working for Petraeus has been great. The next year will be a turning point for the US-Iraq relationship. The USG has got to take on reform and development of the JIATF. Our grand strategy in Iraq is sound, though our means and ways may change. *This was a good interview. Some of the notes below are not clear. It is worth listening to the recording to double check what I've written here.*

## Interviewer Comments

(b)(3), (b)(6) was late for our 2000 interview. He was coming from his Hail and Farewell dinner. When I saw him walking up about 2015, he had (b)(3), (b)(6) with him. (b)(3), (b)(6) was a classmate of (b)(3), (b)(6) at West Point and is (b)(3), (b)(6) successor. I taught with (b)(3), (b)(6) at USMA in the mid-'90s and took an easy liking to him because he is comfortable, confident, smart, and personable. (b)(3), (b)(6) reminded me that he and I had been in flight school together in 1986, which I forgot. I thought he and I had only known one another at Ft. Hood, in the 176<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company from 1986 to 1987. Using my camera, the three of us took pictures to mark this reunion of guys who knew one another somewhere else. (b)(3), (b)(6) and (b)(3), (b)(6) had the strongest relationship as USMA classmates.

I had set this appointment up earlier in the day, about 1600, and when I'd first run into (b)(3), (b)(6) in the hallway and said I'd like to record the story of the last few months, he immediately responded that the story of the last few months was the way Major General Robeson—the just departed CJ5—had destroyed this organization. I was taken aback, having had [almost] no inkling of issues surrounding Robeson on the staff. I did not know if (b)(3), (b)(6) was going to be willing to record that in depth, but we set up the appointment for 2000. I was fortunate to run into him because he told me he was flying out the next day, redeploying.

I was outside his office at 2000 and (b)(3), (b)(6) arrived late with (b)(3), (b)(6) as described. We briefly bantered and took pictures. (b)(3), (b)(6) left and we started the interview. After the recording (b)(3), (b)(6) returned to the subject of Maj Gen Robeson. With fifteen years in command, Robeson could not break out of the command action mindset. According to (b)(3), (b)(6) Robeson could not think like a staff officer and would not

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

coordinate with the other elements on the staff. Rather than focusing on planning—preparing options for the future—Robeson tried to run current ops his way. I don't think I'm recounting effectively what (b)(3), (b)(6) told me. One line he gave me I remember clearly. He tried telling Robeson that success in plans required not that he “command and control, but that he beseech and cajole.” It never took. Increasingly from November '07 on, the effect of this was to leave SPA alienated even from the CG. If you look at the CG's Tasks, SPA virtually drops off as the CG gave up on SPA and directed tasks SPA should have been doing to others (b)(3), (b)(6) thinks the new CJ5, Admiral \_\_\_\_\_, gets it and that this will turn things around.

## Interview

Last February, (b)(3), (b)(6) was getting ready to leave and we were going through proposals for who should succeed him as Chief of Plans. In March, the decision was made to put me here, as Chief of Plans, from Strategy, for the sake of continuity through the April-June time frame because we had a lot of transitions going on. I'm not leaving tomorrow. The new chief of plans is (b)(3), (b)(6) who is coming from the War College. My USMA classmate, he is also a Central Command regional expert. It shows that the top people keep getting picked to come here.

(b)(3), (b)(6) *previously described the development of the PLANORD to me.*

*Would you expand on what the PLANORD is, from your perspective?*

The PLANORD is a framework for looking ahead, for planning for Title X. We have very limited optics here. It is very hard to look weeks ahead, let alone months. The services need a longer horizon. They need to know 12, 18, 24 months ahead of time what they're going to be required to produce. In fighting a campaign, it is very challenging to look ahead or anticipate. In the PLANORD, we looked at three potential futures:

- Unexpected Success
- Slow, steady, deliberate progress
- Progress stalls over an inability to reconcile.

We thought slow, gradual progress was the most likely future. In reality, we've seen acceleration in accommodation. We've seen Iraqis growing confident after operations in Basra and in Sadr City. They've been successful. The GoI is working with sheiks in local areas. They've been uncovering caches, relatively without violence. They've been in the lead. We recommended more deliberation. They listened, thanked us for our views, and then did it their way. They've had circumstantial success.

## *National Policy*

We need a national policy for the greater region. Iraq impacts our ability to perform operations elsewhere. We must stabilize Iraq to gain freedom to maneuver elsewhere. For Afghanistan, the forces have to come from Iraq. We need a policy that looks at Afghanistan, Iran, and the larger Middle East. We previously were insular to Iraq. We made the mistake in the Balkans at looking at these 'national boundaries' for Bosnia, Kosovo, and such, and thinking those boundaries mattered. The people who live there do not regard the boundaries as boundaries. They cross them at will, and ignore them; boundaries do not confine problems. Boundaries provide a place for AQI to retreat

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

across. It is perfect that Petraeus is going to Central Command, because he gets the region and can operate effectively across it.

### ***Moving out of the Embassy Annex***

Images are really important, and it was a terrible mistake we made when we moved into the palaces. That took us from the image of the Liberator to that of the Occupier. It worked against us. The fact we moved into the palaces put us socially into the same light as Saddam, the Iraqis saw one oppressor replacing another. It was bad optics. Moving out of the Republican Palace [on 3 July, P4 directed the staff to vacate the Republican Palace by the end of November] is an important gesture. It shows we're here to help, not to occupy the place brutally. Moving out is better. The quick pace is coming since we knew the UNSCR would expire. We expected a June/July agreement. What we have recognized is that the Iraqis see the operating environment differently. Success drives the move out. We will be complete by November. That gives ownership back, and it's important.

### ***C2 Transformation***

We knew we were not going to have any permanent basing in Iraq, and that meant no permanent headquarters. With that, the gradual drawdown necessitates the gradual collapse of the MNFI and MNCI into one headquarters. We expected deliberate progress. Success has accelerated the time line. The PIC process requires collapse. Iraqis still need enablers. We expect a more normal situation, and that leads to consolidation and drawdown.

### ***The MNFI Headquarters***

General Petraeus is constantly looking for recommendations for immediate action. It is a never let up mentality; seize the initiative and keep it. We create products to shape the future. In a functionally-designed headquarters, it is difficult to de-conflict the various lanes. It required general officers to be action officers. Guidance. Division chiefs were responsive to the Directors. In counterinsurgency, everything comes together at the commander's level, because no one has better situational awareness than the commander. The way the MNFI staff operates, P4 asks five colonels the same question. He's got MNCI, Force, MNSTCI, (b)(6) all working the same problem.

In this headquarters, you've got to have a cultural of mutual understanding. In that, Maj Gen Robeson was an outlier. Having this Marine Corps GO in an Army HQ was an obstacle. SPA was designed for the future, but the guidance was always about today. A typical J5 is always working on potential futures. It makes hypothesis and designs indicators. It does not rely on intelligence. There is no corroborating evidence or indicators. The purpose is to protect the commander's decision making space by developing optional courses of action. Under Robeson, the focus on current ops changed the parameters of what we do. It was unhelpful, but we became good at responding quickly.

We spent a lot of time on possibilities and we have focused on the south, on Basra. In the north, the KRG is stable. That prevented us from taking a long-term preventative

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACQU~~

approach to regional tension. The turmoil of the situation caused us to focus on stability at the expense of weighting long-term viability. We have to take account of [1.4b, 1.4d]

1.4b, 1.4d

### ***Indirect Fire***

[ (b)(3), (b)(6) ] was a major in our office. One day, his CHU took a direct hit. It destroyed everything, and shrapnel peppered his boots with holes. We gave him a "Purple Hooch Award" for a joke. He wore those boots with holes for the rest of his tour here as a reminder. The gym at MNSTCI got hit. I knew from all this that no place was safe. It all came from Sadr City, a contested area, a safe haven from JAM and the SG. A rocket landed just outside the embassy and destroyed our vehicle. Our driver was standing just outside the door and got hit in the thigh. Shrapnel came through a second floor window. Even here, in a building, you're not safe. It could happen anywhere.

### ***High Point***

People have been the high point, coming from all over, and putting in 7 days a week, hard working, making great products. We've had a shared enemy: AQI. There's been emotions and high points. The J5 decision to focus on current events caused tension and a lot of emotional stress which limited our effectiveness. We have shared adversity. Move out of this environment. Good possibility of living in tents out at VBC if we go too fast in getting out of the IZ. That would be a new shared adversity. We've had a shared vision from the intense Petraeus. I've had frustration from not looking far enough ahead. We need more time to look farther ahead.

We as a nation are having a clouded vision. We're questioning this. Will we sustain it and keep the course? We face the electoral process ahead of us. Composition of Iraq. It could have a national election. Concerned about [1.4b, 1.4d]

### ***Who here would you most like to have a beer with in a year's time?***

Admiral Bus, the new J5. He has the desire to get the information and build relationships. He will change things and have a significant impact.

[ (b)(3), (b)(6) ] I've been here during the height of the surge, when we made the Iraqi people the center of gravity. That has been historic. The next year will be historic. A new relationship will emerge. Iraq will choose its path. My time was a turning point. The next year will be a turning point in the US-Iraq relationship. We do not have a good

~~SECRET/REL ACQU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACQU~~

track record in the region. The next year will be pivotal. I would like to ask (b)(3), (b)(6) what he has learned.

I'd like to get together with the Strategy and Plans guys. It has been a joint team. It will make a future joint team. I would like to hear how this time has shaped them. I expect a powerful resonance from this.

***What is your next assignment?***

(b)(6)

Afghanistan. We need new ways of working. We need to capitalize on this and change our government's culture, the National Security Council. We need to develop products and proselytize them. We need a national approach to that.

The key is the Joint Interagency Task Force. We have a chance to change our governing culture. Are we seeing a shift? Are we seeing new involvement from the rest of the interagency? The work is no longer sequential; it is simultaneous, and we need a national governing culture to match that.

***What would you say in December if called upon to brief the President-elect?***

- 1) We have national interests in Iraq.
- 2) We don't want an enduring military presence.
- 3) We do want enduring influence.

That means our means have got to change, with greater emphasis on diplomatic, economic, and political, and not military. It has been military because of the sheer size of the DOD, but we need to grow the other agencies.

I recently talked with General Keane and the (b)(6) on their visit. The strategy, I told them, will endure. The strategy is for an Iraq that is democratic, an ally, and international partner. The question is ends, ways, and means. The means may change, and that changes the way, but the ends remain. Our grand strategy is right. The next President will tinker with ways and means, but neither candidate has rejected the ends.

AFTER THE RECORDING

***Who else should I talk to about the issues you've raised, particularly surrounding the J5?***

You should talk to Brigadier Woolsey, (b)(3), (b)(6)  
(b)(3), (b)(6) It would be a good idea to go to J-SPA and talk to (b)(3), (b)(6), Bill Lynch-retired two-star, (b)(6)

~~SECRET/REL ACQU~~