

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

RDML Gregory J. Smith (USN)

MNFI STRATEFF COMMS Chief Public Affairs

6 May 2008

Embassy Annex, International Zone, Baghdad

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

MNFI Historian

Abstract

I spent my entire naval career in public affairs. In 2007, the Navy offered Petraeus complete support, and I joined MNFI to help fix its broken communications. It did not have the right people or the right structure. He implemented many critical changes. At JFCOM, Smith stood up a new organization to work on joint public affairs, the JPASE. We have done STRATCOM at MNFI right, and the rest of the military wants to replicate it, but there are not enough resources. Petraeus is one of the few senior commanders to have understood communications. He led it correctly, right from the beginning. For the last 9 months, we've successfully shaped the communications environment. Interaction of policy and communications is very complicated. Commanders have to direct their own communications. The say/do gap is a serious problem when you launch unnecessary ordinance that kills civilians and likely doesn't kill the target. It is a huge challenge to have to address multiple audiences; it precludes precision. Iraqi PAO is developing, but has a long way to go. The GoI's communications in recent weeks have been a serious problem, but Maliki has been fortunate. It has helped to drive home the principal that only the government can have heavy weapons. 1.4b, 1.4d

1.4b, 1.4d

1.4b, 1.4d I think we have developed the model for Strategic Communications, and I came here to do this because I feared others would take the wrong lessons from MNFI and Strategic Communications. People talk of STRATCOM as if its new, but most everything I've done has just been implementing best practices of sound public affairs doctrine. Secretary Rumsfeld acting as his own spokesman was bad. Gates does much better, but the structure below him is still broken. Petraeus has been a great leader and a master communicator. I greatly admire the bravery of Iraqis I've seen carry on through this turmoil.

Interview

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) In Christmas of '06, Admiral Mullen, then the Chief of Naval Operations, had visited out here and met with BG Mike Caldwell and they discussed Strategic Communications, and it was clear to Admiral Mullen that support was needed and that maybe the Navy could help with some expertise. General Petraeus was then nominated, and in a meeting they had, Admiral Mullen offered his Chief of Information, me, and some other folks to come out and give an assessment of how we might improve or build upon the communications

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACQU~~

efforts. General Petraeus had not yet taken over and he did not accept the offer outright. He wanted to get his own assessment of the situation. He took over in February '07.

Sir, for an additional background question, Secretary Rumsfeld frequently expressed great dissatisfaction with the Pentagon's Strategic Communications. Could you discuss what the issues were?

3:20. In September 2001, I had just left the Pentagon and gone out to the Pacific fleet and spent the first 20 months of the post-9/11 era out in Hawaii, so somewhat disconnected from the Washington circuit. I returned in the Spring of 2003 and began working with Admiral Giambiastani at JFCOM, Norfolk, in his effort to begin shaping the Strategic Communications discussion and what it meant from a force structure point of view. We put together an organization that was approved by the Joint Chiefs called the Joint Public Affairs Support Element. It is a group of just under 50 individuals, ½ uniformed individual augmentees, and ½ civilians. Their day job is to work with the combatant commanders to improve their communications with exercises and training and with contingency plans and operations plans that are on the shelf today to make them more executable should they ever have to implement them. Then their support to the war fighter directly is to be able to deploy on short notice to combat theaters to support communications from the very onset of the standup of a joint task force, or some other joint activity. The reason for that is because up until that time, there had been no organized effort to support the joint war fighter with trained professionals. Up until that time, it had always been a pickup game, where JMDs are built, or not, and individuals are sourced across the services one at a time and flown up to be able to develop a team for whatever commander. The JPASE was the beginning on how to operationalize communications, and in terms of strategic communications . . . it was a bit of an effort to coalesce . . . all the discussions going on how to improve all our communications, to include the information operations part of it, specifically psychological operations, public affairs, and public diplomacy, which we support but don't do ourselves. The list included any list of items coming under Strategic Communications, which got shortened to STRATCOM.

How does all that work together was the problem set that defined STRATCOM. Unfortunately, from '03 through '06, when I left JFCOM and went to the Joint Staff, it was there we really began working at the Joint level that we really rolled up our sleeves at the interagency and joint level to begin working across PA, IO, Public diplomacy and others to draft up what has become the definition of what STRATCOM is. I very vividly remember the day that we just closed the door and spent several hours with all the right people and came up with the definition. What we tried to do was to remove really the references to the 'communities of practice'--public affairs, IO--because it really wasn't about that. It was really about the commander trying to achieve the effects he needed to achieve, and it was recognition that it was really more than a communication, but it was what we communicate by our actions and our deeds. So it is an effects-based approach to communication, recognizing that the various lines of operation that play into Strategic Communications and is not simply the message or the messenger, but does in fact have a great deal more to do with synchronization of our command efforts to achieve the communication effects we are looking for. Some days it may be completed weighted on

~~SECRET/REL ACQU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

operations and kinetics, the movement of our forces, the activity of our people. Other times you might argue this has a lot more to do with what we say. In most cases, it is a blend of all those things. So, what STRATCOM embodies today is really the synchronization of the other lines of operation for the commander and what he can do outside his chain of command to achieve the effect that he's been asked to achieve, and that is what STRATCOM has become.

8:40. So leading up to 2006 when I took over as the Chief of Information for U.S. Joint Forces Command, and I had all this joint staff working this issue, standing up this JPASE, being part of folks wrestling with STRATCOM, we also had the Quadrennial Defense Review going on. One of its components in the last go round was Strategic Communications, and it offered a definition as well as a host of actions and milestones to achieve the capacity of the DoD to support STRATCOM. Those are being worked on at various levels. My next assignment will be as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs for Joint Communications. And that office is under the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and is charged to begin to advance our capacity to do STRATCOM in DoD.

Back in March or April of 2007, we offered to put together a team for a two-week assessment trip for sometime in May. It wasn't long after the offer was made that General Petraeus wrote back and said he appreciated the offer, but he didn't need a team to come in and spend two weeks telling him what was wrong and then leaving. He knew there was plenty to work on. What he needed was people to come in and apply their skills to make it right, and he said if we were going to come, it needed to be for at least 90 days and we had to implement what we thought needed to be done. We had a joint team with a senior O-6 from each of the services being offered up for the two-week visit. Once the 90-day requirement was imposed, each of those O-6s had to drop out because they were not in a position to give up their day job for that period of time. We then had to put together another team, that was all Navy.

I then came over on 8 May on my own, outside of this team, to assess, and I arranged the team to come in in late May for the implementation phase of 90 days.

Before I left, I had lots of perceptions, as folks do from 6,000 miles away. My perception was that MNF-I PAO had the wrong structure and the wrong people doing the job. The reputation of this organization's communications was pretty poor among those who depend on it, the media principally. Despite the great efforts of BG Caldwell as a spokesman, the rest of the organization was frustrated because it was not organized properly or focused on communication. What had happened over the previous years was they'd never had a communications officer in charge of communications. It was always a line officer, a field artilleryman, an aviator, who sat at this desk for a year, and they created structures and process that they thought was communications, but when I saw what they had here, I did not recognize it as the kinds of things I'd grown up with that we in the Navy had learned were the best practices in peacetime and we needed to apply them in wartime as well.

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

13:40. I arrived with the joint team, we made 30 to 40 recommendations and out briefed BG Caldwell who was leaving, and MG K. Bergner was coming in, and RDML Mark Fox, the head of Strategic Communications who had been here since December of 2006, overlapping the Casey era. They accepted all our recommendations and the Navy team came in to implement. It was then a long-tough summer. We began the surge. It was like building an airplane in flight because we couldn't stop. We were changing the organization. We did it in stride and during what was probably the most difficult summer we have seen in Iraq, but by July sometime, General Petraeus was being briefed on RDML Fox's pending rotation and who the Navy was going to send over to replace him, and then I was told that he wanted to keep me here, and that became the impetus for a discussion with the CNO on my staying on here. So I've been here since May '07, and I got to right the ship and build the team and lead it, and it has been quite an opportunity.

Could you discuss some of the top recommendations?

16:00. The big one was to reorient the organization externally. It had really been built up to focus on internal structures and processes. There was too much emphasis on feeding information to our command. Most of our focus actually needs to be external, we need to feed information proactively, for the most part, to the media that is telling the broader story. There was too much focus on our BUA. There were 12 people working on BUA slides every day, which is too much. It would be the complete focus of the night shift. There was no structure here to support media operations. There was a single officer here with two cell phones, who literally was going crazy 24/7 trying to answer media queries, and the rest of the staff, for the most part, was not part of that process at all. They had set up Media Operations over at the . . . what we call the CPIC, the Coalition Press Information Center, at what we call Ocean Cliffs, near the al Rashid Hotel, which had just one SIPR drop. Therefore, they could not be connected to operations. So we transferred and set up a true Media Operations Center over here [south wing of the Embassy Annex, a 90-second walk through the building to the MNF-I Strategic Operations Center], as part of a facility that is designed for that. But, again, because I think all the focus over here had been on 'feeding the beast,' feeding the RFIs internal to the organization, they weren't really generating output from an effects-based point of view. So re-orienting toward the externally, re-organizing to do that, and getting the right people in here to do that. There was an overemphasis on numbers of people as opposed to quality of people. And we were able to re-write the JMD to reflect exactly what we needed and to reduce the numbers of people, because if you ask for the right people and skill sets, then you need fewer people to do it. So you can ask for 10 people, but the service might offer that it doesn't have 10 people, but it can give you this MPAD (Military Public Affairs Detachment, NG or AR) unit with 1.4a people. But you don't need 1.4a you only need ten. So you've got to define the skills you need. That tends to give rise to bad mentality of 'manpower's free' so let's just get more people. Instead, get the right people and make a big difference.

19:25. Then, even though it sounds self serving, it is about having expertise in your leadership. I don't get paid to shoot artillery or fly airplanes, and I wouldn't expect those guys to try to do what I do. There is a reason why the Navy invests in communications all the way up through the flag officer level, which is really what you must have here in

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

this organization, in order to be effective in a four-star JTF. To give you an example, Afghanistan is a three-star structure, and their senior communications officer is an O-5, and they're hurting. There's nothing happening, there's no resources. It is very difficult for them to make a difference. And now, they--the Navy, Afghanistan, and others--all want to model what we've done here, but the reality is there's only so many resources out there to do it with. We did this for a year with a professional communicator at the helm, and we're not repeating it, because there is no body behind me. My relief--RDML Driscoll--is another aviator, another fine officer no doubt, but not his day job. He's used to flying air planes. This is not his day job and he would be the first one to tell you that. It is a steep learning curve. It is not intuitive. Everything has to be thought through more deeply than you would have to if you had more experience. So it is hard to replace 26 years experience in this job with anyone who hasn't had the experience and really hasn't been doing it. Unfortunately . . . So those are the two big things.

I've been struck, in many high-level headquarters I've been in, that senior commanders tend to confuse masses of leaflets and broadcasts with a coherent message.

21:35. Yes, those things are all measures of performance rather than measures of effectiveness. The big thing is we need to acknowledge is that none of these things would have happened without the commander. This is nothing against General Casey; I've never met the man. But it is clear that General Petraeus is the Chief of Public Affairs; he is the head spokesman; he is the chief communicator; he is the head of STRATCOM. It is because of his leadership and the way he leads in terms of effects-based thinking, and because he understands that the communications component can lead, support, follow, and all the ways it can be properly integrated, how we can shape the environment with our communications, either leading or following kinetic operations. He is what has made the difference, and that goes to that whole leadership thing. And I suspect that LTG Odierno, when he gets here, because he witnessed the power of what General Petraeus did, will embrace the same role for communications.

By the time of the September testimony, were you already seeing tangible results from your efforts?

23:15. We were still getting people into position and organized but we were pretty much starting to crank by August. I think we were well-positioned to "shape" the environment leading up to September. That has to do with more than just action, some of it has a lot more to do with philosophy. If you take the testimony with September with that of the spring of '08, I think we extended my philosophy, which is that the more transparent we can be about what we're about, and close the gap between perception and reality, then the better off we'll be going to the Hill. Going to the Hill and having people disagree on what's actually happening as opposed to talking about the future, you'll waste time just trying to get people to agree on what it is. If the communication environment has been transparent enough, all that shaping has been done. People for the most part understand where we are today, and now we just how to get down perspective and talk about the way forward. Now, I think in the Spring of 2008, after eight or nine months of pounding on this philosophy, I think we got to a position where there was little debate about what it is. There is certainly a lot of debate about what to do about it, but at least the debate about

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

what it is is pretty much over, the gap between perception and reality had pretty much been closed in most dimensions, not in all, but in most. And that, again, was based on just the day to day thinking about how we get the message out there, story out there, expose this place for what it is, good, bad, and ugly, so that people at least know what we're facing. And the truth, although sometimes it hurts, it's more powerful than the ambiguity and uncertainty, and we don't need that ambiguity when it comes to policies and decision making at the highest levels. So, as our Congress ponders what to do here in Iraq, and as the American public ponders what to do, I think our job as communicators has been to make certain that that is as crystal clear of an understanding as we can possibly make it from a thousand miles away, and also not in direct control of the message, again, because we don't deliver it, we just provide access, often to the messengers, which is Congressmen who come here to visit, media who are here covering it, and pundits and experts who talk about it.

How does this interact with policy?

26:00. That is interesting because I am still not seeing a lot of policy from the Pentagon and the White House, and that is what we do here. I hate to be so bold as to think that we drive policy, but I think to a large degree that policy winds up riding on the coat tails of our activity here in many cases

1.4b, 1.4d

1.4b, 1.4d

our rudders from Washington on that, and in many cases because we were in the best position to know precisely what it is we were seeing on the battlefield and better to explain that. And to Washington's credit, they're allowed us to do that so long as we keep them informed so they can develop their thoughts on that. From an academic point of view, the way you'd like STRATCOM to work is you'd like the President with commander's intent shaped in such a way that it becomes so precise, that we know exactly what we need to do at this level [to serve the intent]. I think we have that commander's intent when it comes to many things when it comes to Iraq, but not all, and a lot of it gets shaped right here by this commander, who again, he may get exactly what he needs. The guidance, and he executes it, and we may not be seeing it directly. We're not in the weekly SVTS with the President either . . . where he gets it directly and then transfers it to us in the BUAs. But policy . . . I think that is still the great debate about how policy can not inform our communications or vice-versa.

I recall in August Petraeus acknowledged policy arose both from the executive's guidance and the legislature's budget making.

Paraphrase: There are many policymakers. We have orders and there are multiple policy makers involved in influencing our operations. We have a mission, to support the transition of the government of Iraq, and that is clear enough, but we have all the complexities of that mission, and we, when we get to this level, should already have the experience and judgment to operate in this kind of situation.

We should already recognize the right and left boundaries, and if you're looking for policy-directed guidance, you're probably late, you're behind the target. You should know all that already. Sometimes, if I say something about 1.4b I pause and think,

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

"Wow, what I just said about [1.4b] is pretty powerful stuff, and if that is shaping what the world will now think U.S. policy is on [1.4b] . ." That's a pretty powerful thing to think about. But I tell you that on some days, I think we have done that out here.

I've heard General Petraeus say "in the absence of guidance, do what the guidance should have been."

29:40. That's right, and you should have the judgment to figure that out and implement it. And if somebody tells you you're wrong, you're wrong, but I don't think the system works well enough to respond to the needs of the war fighting commander, because here it moves so fast, [circles?] here are moving at light speed, where other places ops are moving much slower, and where those two bump up against each other, occasionally you get a little bit of [free electrons?] floating off of them that, otherwise, short of somebody intervening and stopping you, what you're doing, is the key thing, and I think that's what we've done with communications in Iraq.

If you were to address an NDU seminar for future commanders, what lessons would you lay out for them that they need to carry with them to their commands?

30:46. First, that they need to embrace the notion that they are the senior communicator. That does not mean that they do all the interviews, it means that they understand and grasp the power of communications, and they have got to be the driving force behind what their organization does to support communications, and it has got to be directed from the top. They have got to both participate in the process by giving us good commanders' intent, on a daily, hourly, minute-by-minute basis, and they have to direct their subordinates to participate fully in the process. General Petraeus does a great job of encouraging others to get out there and participate in this process. And you've also got to think your way through it. Again, from the lines of operation intersecting one another to make sure that . . . what we call the say/do gap does not exist. What we say does not conflict with what we do, and understand that sometimes we speak before we do it. Other times we do before we speak, and other times we speak and do it all at the same time. But all that has to be understood and it is far easier to have an academic discussion about it than it is to actually do it, but if you're going to be in this game, you better have the best players in the field with you, because it is far too important to bring in the B-team.

What is the role of statistics and the efforts that Assessments has made to lay out for the media what we're counting and how?

32:50. The transparency of how we describe things and in that case we're trying to be transparent about how we develop numbers and statistics so that the media understand . . . as long as we're consistent, they'll at least understand when we tell you something, what the basis of that is, and you might disagree that the numbers are higher or lower than somebody else's numbers, but the reality is, we've always counted it this way, and here's why we count it this way. We can't tell you what discipline there is in other people's numbers, but it has always been interesting in this environment that the trend lines are almost always the same. [?] and the media weren't beating us up any more on the fact that our numbers were higher or lower than somebody else's, the key was that we

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

consistently saw the same trend lines, whatever numbers you were using. And a bad month was a bad month and a good month was a good month, depending on what the metric was, and being willing to expose ourselves to the scrutiny of the media, and that was done last . . . last December, early December I think it was . . . it was in conjunction with the 9010 report which comes out every three months, and it again was so that there would be a clear understanding of the baseline that was being used.

34:00. We had determined that some of the statistic in use didn't really make sense, so we were changing some of the things we were counting, or how we were counting them, and we could not do that without first explaining this whole process to a number of journalists so they would understand what we were doing and why we were doing it. That worked out well. But the say/do gap is really about a common understanding . . . and what we communicate has a lot more to do with what we do [than what we say]. You can't focus only on what you're saying about you're actions. Your actions have to match your words, and vice-versa.

34:50. For example, I am not a big fan of sending GLMRS into Sadr City, Ground Launched Missiles Rocket System. The Army fires it off a ground based platform that is GPS guided and travels some 25 miles with a 200 lb warhead. Sending a missile into a crowded urban environment, while it may achieve the tactical effect you're looking for, to destroy a building or kill an individual, the associated consequences of that action may in fact set you back in terms of what you're trying to achieve overall as an effect. So you've got to think through those things. And somebody has got to be the critic of the great idea by the artilleryman wanting to use GLMRS instead of a Hellfire or some other means, because . . . their argument might be 'what the probability of a kill?' Well, my argument will be "well, no matter what you do, here's is going to be the outcome. This is what people are going to sense about what you just did, and this is what their reaction is going to be in the communication environment." This has got to be about more than just killing the enemy. I mean . . . attrition has never been a principal of the COIN strategy. It is really about really changing people's attitudes and understanding, so that they will partner with you against terrorism and insurgency, and often that comes with limiting some of your kinetic activities in order to avoid the sort of STRATCOM collateral damage that you might get from your actions.

36:50. For example, the other night they had a sniper on the roof. They decided to use a Hellfire to take him out, and they missed. Ten minutes later they decided to fire a second Hellfire, which by that time I'm not sure the guy was even around anymore, but unfortunately three kids were down the street, and they were killed. So then you have those images of kids being killed by the coalition. That does a lot of damage.

Is STRATCOM not only external, but internal, getting the message down to the troops about what we're doing and why?

Absolutely, there is that internal focus as well, but really getting it down to the troop level is about leadership, and that is what commanders at every level are responsible for. In the end, you can't replace the commander at the unit level, and they've got to sense what is higher authorities' guidance and get it down to the troops. That's what senior NCOs are

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

paid to do, and every commander has that responsibility. . But we're never going to have a perfect one-on-one, straight-line shot to the troops. What we want is leadership.

38:30. I think we have seen a dramatic change here, and I've heard it from the media, that from MNFI through MNCI to the divisions and out to the units, that there is a unified message and understanding. This is not because we are over controlling the message; it is because we are getting the word out there, so that everybody sort of sees the same stuff, and the media picks up on that, and that's a good thing.

I also see a challenge of getting a consistent message to all audiences.

39:25. That is a tricky nuance from day to day. We work this pretty hard as far as how we describe criminals, Special Group guys, how we describe any individual, and the

. . . and we've had success tying the ORSA team into STRATCOM.

There are unique audiences out there, that you're trying to shape, so you think . . and you can't be precise in this environment, well it's very difficult, again, short of a sit-down, one-on-one conversation. Most everything else has so many [?], whether it's the internet, a billboard, a leaflet, the radio, there are just not discrete audiences out there where you can say, "okay, today I'm going to talk to this audience with this message on this medium." That's not practical. And . . but there are some ways in which we focus more effort on a pan-Arab audience using certain kinds of outlets than others. And we certainly want to talk differently about things when we are addressing a western audience.

Do you deal with many audiences that just shut down to the message?

41:00. We know that here in Iraq, that many Iraqis do not want to hear from guys like me. So what we're trying to do is help the government of Iraq provide the spokesmen on their issues, and the way to do that is to make sure they've got the information. We do a lot of training to try to make sure they have the necessary skills and we provide full-time LNOs with the key spokesmen. That is another best practice we've implemented. We've provided people with the language skills full time in the MoD/MoI/GoI headquarters. Those Iraqi spokesmen now have many more skills to speak on their issues, and they're highly encouraged to do that. And that is much more effective than us talking on issues, especially to the people of Iraq. They are developing. A year ago, there were only 1 or 2 people who were qualified to speak. Today, there are a half-dozen out there all the time, and they've been empowered to do it. It is still very nascent. They don't have our depth of organization or lots of people that know what their doing or all the equipment, but it is an Iraqi solution to an Iraqi problem. That is what you want here. Western solutions with western models and great big org charts and "here's how we do it back home" attitude--that won't get you very far in Iraq. In learning what they can and can't do, I'd say they've done a pretty good job.

You noted that the commander has to be the chief PAO. Have you seen that in PM Maliki, in his development?

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACQU~~

43:11. No. That has been frustrating to see mixed development among the elected leadership. The spokesmen are doing the heavy lifting, but that is the nature of the situation here.

Can you describe the events of the last few weeks?

45:00. I think it begins with the PM going down to Basra after having done very little [nothing] to shape the communications environment relative to Basra. There has not been a whole lot of rhetoric whereby the Government of Iraq expressed its growing concern over the situation in Basra or its policy or intent. They didn't work through the stages of discussion at a national level of what the end game was going to be. Instead, they jumped right into kinetics, and they did all that with little foresight and planning, at least not from a western perspective. Perhaps it was exactly how Iraqis would do such a thing. They went down on Easter weekend, and we saw here in Baghdad, before the operation began, perhaps because JAM saw that something was about to happen in Basra, they launched on Easter Sunday what became the first of over 900 rockets since March 23, many, many of them have not fallen on us, the target, but on Baghdad neighborhoods. But the fact that the GoI just launched its operation that Tuesday with very little understanding of what their real intent was, and again, from a communications view, their actions were all judged as anti-JAM and pro-Dawa/ISCI/Badr, and if that was not their intent, and today it doesn't appear that it was, well, it certainly wasn't communicated properly by their actions, so we had a lot of digging out to do early on from a communications point of view

47:00. And nobody was really in a position to do that. All the leadership, the PM, the MoD, the MoI, had all gone down to Basra, and nobody up here was empowered to say what was going on. So it was all a lot of confusion and a lot of kinetics, but not handled very well. They got lucky though, because people in Basra, and other elements, mostly foreigners, Sadr himself . . . backed down, and the government itself was able to declare victory, even if it wasn't victory. And they were able to announce both by their actions and their words that they were going to deal universally with criminality in Basra, as opposed to advancing a sectarian agenda or a political agenda, and they were going to get commerce back on its feet. Fast forward to today, they have done a pretty good job doing that.

48:20. Meanwhile, though, Sadr City pretty much became the Alamo of Sadr City, because they felt this has really been an attack on their organization, their political movement, and their militia. And I think they saw their strength in Sadr City, not in Basra, and so that's where they're going to make their stand. But the messaging part of this thing has caught up, I think. For the most part, it is hard to argue that the GoI does not have the right to ensure that guns [or heavy weapons?] are taken out of the hands of individuals that shouldn't have them, so that principal alone has been the principal communication/bumper sticker and it has worked for the GoI and the coalition and it is a Rule of Law issue. I think there are very fundamentally, constitutionally-valid ways of describing what they're doing that in fact are reflected in their actions. It may be that the

~~SECRET/REL ACQU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

primary targets of their operations are card-carrying JaM members, but again, those [retorts?] are being made by those individuals, and we'll see where this goes.

***The Ambassador has said that he does not understand what is going on in [1.4b]
How do you deal with it?***

49:45. Well, we don't try to read too much into what . . . what we see in [1.4b] and what their real intent might be. We do discuss it from the point of view of what we are actually seeing on the ground in Iraq with demonstrative proof that there needs to be something done in [1.4b] to deal with two key issues. One is, if they're not purposely providing weapons to Iraq, if it is not organized from a government perspective, it certainly is clear that from an industrial based point of view, the availability of weapons being produced in [1.4b] and smuggled into Iraq needs to be dealt with by the [1.4b]. They can control their borders; they can control their weapons industries. It is all state-owned and all state-run. There is very little excuse for that. If they have an uncontrolled black market, then again they need to deal with that, because it is all inside their borders and it could be dealt with. The training of Iraqis, again, there is just no ambiguity in that. We do know precisely who, when, and how much, and they know that, or if they continue to ignore that fact, then that would suggest to us that the [1.4b] are fully aware of their intent and have no intent of stopping it. So, our job really is . . . I think, to be very open and very transparent with the public, and with the GoI and the [1.4b] and make certain that they are fully aware of what we know and when we know it. That has been our policy since last summer, and I [?] because what you don't want to do is have a whole lot of knowledge that we ourselves own that has not been shared that you then have to sort of play catch up at some point, to sort of catch up people's perception of reality, make the average person with a clear eye on this realize that there is [1.4b, 1.4d]

51:45. We're just not certain, as the Ambassador has pointed out, what is going on inside [1.4b, 1.4d] but clearly something is.

What state are we in in terms of developing the concept of Strategic Communications?

52:10. I think we at least have begun to define how to operationalize it, and if this theater reflects future models of theaters of war, then you can argue that we should learn from this and try to replicate it elsewhere and use this as a doctrinal footprint. To that end, that was why I asked a team from JFCOM to come, and a small team did come earlier this month, and they went away with their assessment of best practices and they intend to push this into doctrinal publications in order to codify this long term. They briefed the CG on their findings and he was very much in agreement that they had caught the major lessons learned.

53:10. I didn't mention this earlier. One of the motivations for why I personally wanted to come out here and give up being the head of Navy Public Affairs in order to try to make a difference out here, had little to do with trying to change public perceptions back home or trying to "turn the tide" of public opinion on all those things that in the winter of 2007 were going in the wrong direction. What I really wanted to do was to have in place here something that, if this was used as the model, we, professional communicators,

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACQU~~

would feel very comfortable with that being the template for the future. I was very worried that if left unchecked, the next engagement, and you pick the theater of operations, they would say, "well this is the way we did it at MNF-I," and then they would replicate that on a new organization, which would transfer the wrong lessons learned and the wrong structure, and so forth, so I really wanted to come out here and set firmly on a sound doctrinal basis the best practices to doing public affairs. You can call it STRATCOM if you like, but it's 90% what I've been doing all my life anyway. And this sort of new academic spin of calling it STRATCOM does not really, for me, define in any new way, what I've been doing my entire career in Navy Public Affairs. But for the larger joint community, I'm embracing STRATCOM because it helps them get their arms around it. But for me, I can leave here now, and I leave next week, knowing that some of the things don't change, that we can take small chunks of this activity and transplant them at US Pacific Command and help them deal with China or North Korea, or you pick the place.

Would you comment on Transformation as the term was used in the early part of the Bush administration?

55:20. I lived through all that. It really was the brainchild of Admiral Giambiastani at JFCOM. Of course, Transformation is the wrong word in that it suggests a beginning and an end. What we have is a constant learning environment where we avoid becoming stagnant and we keep thinking how to improve. It is a way of thinking about organization and reflects a constant desire to learn and apply. You take a holistic view to what you're doing. You don't let structure, organization, or process stop the process of transforming. There have been all kinds of business buzzwords in the past about how to transform organizations. It is really about how we fundamentally think about the organization and keep thinking about how to transform the organization. You have to constantly learn every day, if you in a learning environment, and I think the DoD has become a learning, adaptive organization since 2001. I think MNFI has transformed and will keep transforming.

Looking at Al Qaeda, would you say they're adaptive or stuck?

58:10. Al Qaeda, they got themselves in a real bind because of how they approached their whole ideology and it has really backfired on them in terms of how the civilian population has rejected the whole AQI ideology. There is every sense that they are a learning organization, and we should not underestimate Al Qaeda's ability to regenerate a new package, a new way of selling themselves, and maybe a new generation of disenchanted people out there that look at the new bumper sticker and sign up.

58:50. So, the king isn't dead here, with regard to Al Qaeda. They very much are a chameleon, adaptable organization, and we shouldn't underestimate that. The al Qaeda that we face ten years from now might have morphed into something much more dangerous than what we see today.

What are the risks that a new administration will choose to clean house rather than focus on best practices?

~~SECRET/REL ACQU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACQU~~

1:00:00. The notion of cleaning house normally shouldn't reach down very far and probably wouldn't have that great an impact. How they issue policy and guidance, that has a major impact. I think the next Secretary of Defense has a lot of work to do to improve the quality of communications within the department. I think, at that time, we will still be faced with a very hostile media environment back in Washington because we have not invested in the right people, in the Pentagon, to cultivate that relationship. The new Secretary of Defense has to think very carefully about how he structures the media relationship and who he chooses his spokesman to be. They have a long ways to go given what has happened in recent years in the Pentagon and how that has eroded the media relationship in Washington. Out here it is a different animal.

Secretary Rumsfeld served as his own spokesman. Would you comment on how that happened and what its effects were?

1:02:15. Well I lived through most of that, and when you are out there and you become THE spokesman and you're out there so much in front, what it does is it makes it very difficult for your subordinates to speak. I think you've got to pick your time and choosing of your communication, especially when it comes to standing at the podium in front of the press corps. When you're the Secretary of Defense, I don't think it can be as frequent and as loosely defined as Secretary Rumsfeld chose to use it, nor can it be a pulpit for lectures and condemnations and all that. But the current Secretary of Defense has done a wonderful job of rebuilding the relationships with much of the press corps himself, personally. I would still argue that much of the structure below him is broke, but . . . you know, its improving.

Would you rate media outlets for credibility?

1:03:26. The Iraqi media space has grown exponentially, print media and broadcasting. There is a sense of free press here, but not really. It is vastly political. All the outlets are owned by one party or another, and there is a lot of government influence, given that the parties that run the government own the media, and that is very dangerous. Clearly, in the US, there are groups of individuals who you might argue are more liberal or conservative running media outlets, but consider if the Republican Party owned ABC news. Well, that's what it is here in Iraq. That's I think, from a long-term point of view, not going to be healthy.

From a pan-Arab view, none of the media is independent. They are all owned by some government, or some political party. I think as long as you understand that, you can conduct business here, but you have to understand that the media you are talking to is Shia owned and operated, etc. The Iraqis have a long ways to go in terms of their professionalism and fairness and balance. But consider where they were a few years ago.

1:05:45. The western media has chosen to make a investment here in Iraq that has been up and down. Right now, they're downsizing. It is very, very expensive to operate a news bureau. They'll be here as long as there is a story that they want to tell, and getting our story out is going to be more and more challenging because there are going to be fewer outlets here to tell the story, and few journalists available to cover these stories, which means the American public is going to be even less informed as the media's

~~SECRET/REL ACQU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

coverage declines. And much of what they're informed of is not necessarily comprehensive in its coverage.

How has IDF in the IZ degraded operations in the last couple of months?

1:06:55. Since our facility here (the south appendage to the embassy) is not hardened, every time there is a siren, my staff has to drop everything to get to the central rotunda for protection. If we get into another high period of IDF, we'll have to move out of here because it is very disruptive to our operations. That is not something I would want the enemy to know. It does have an impact when you're not in a hardened structure. We've had small numbers of civilians leave, and the IDF does that. We have a lot of smart contractors, fresh out of college, who didn't sign up for this, who've seen their trailers hit [and are not too enthused by it]. It has been a distraction. It has not stopped us from doing our job.

I know the National Dispatch Center has had problems with reporting because the violence has kept the staff from getting to work.

1:09:00. It has has and impact, with most of the staff coming out of areas around Sadr City not being able to get to work, and that has hurt the labor force across Baghdad. What was so exciting coming out of the fall and into the winter was that with the decline in violence we started seeing a whole lot of economic and political activity pick up. Then you get increased violence and it slowed down everything to a trickle, so it is very damaging to everything you see here in Baghdad. Now, if you leave Baghdad, you'll see that everything else is trucking right along. I was in Taji a few weeks ago visiting with some farmers, and they didn't talk about what was going on in Baghdad. They've got their own lives and problems to deal with. Baghdad, thankfully, does not define the rest of Iraq.

Are Iraqis rallying around Maliki and his policies?

I don't know about Iraqis generally, but the political groups are. If that [dealing with the militias] wins him the capital he needs to deal with other issues in Iraq, that's a good thing.

What are your lasting impressions of this tour?

1:11:25. First, I will always remember and appreciate General Petraeus' leadership. He is very verbal, so you always know right where you stand with him, what he is trying to achieve and what he wants you to achieve.

The bravery of a couple of Iraqis comes to mind. One who lost everything, was kidnapped, released, and still was a patriot ready to serve his country.

Then, a family was here in the IZ, with eight small kids, and living in a small space, little more than twice this room, in a bombed out structure, father a gardener, and the fact that they're happy, they're smile, they love to see you, and you realize, My lord, this is tough living, and we donated stuff to them, but it just shows you the hardiness of the Iraqi people to suffer for so long. If you're 20, you've known nothing but war, violence, and hardship. The children are the future of Iraq. It is the 18-month-old who has a future. If

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

we can get this thing back on track by the time they go to school, get shoes on their feet, then there'll be a chance for the future.

1:15:23.

Approved for Release

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~

Approved for Release

~~SECRET/REL ACGU~~