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[redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6) (USA)

8 May 2008

CG Conference Room off SOC, Embassy Annex, International Zone, Baghdad

by [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6)
MNFI Historian

Interviewer comments: I served with [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6) at USMA in 1996-1997. I also interviewed him in January, and that interview file with his background and duties in Baghdad up through January are available with my collection. Most of the transcript is based just on my notes. I had limited time to listen to the recording. Some of the thoughts are incomplete.

Abstract

~~(S/NF)~~ I visited the Mosul dam in January and the city before operations began. We had not planned for Basra. We had three CAC meetings. The IDF in the IZ impacted operations from late March on. Mr. Hussein has negotiated with OMS in Najaf and in Baghdad. JAM is operating under external influence. [redacted] 1.4b, 1.4d

[redacted] 1.4b, 1.4d but there may have been a crack in its position. The PM NOC is improving. My staff section, the MNFI LNOs to the PMNOC, is getting much smaller, and that will make coordination more difficult. As a result of my tour here, I am heavily invested in this and the success of the operation. I'm concerned what will happen as a result of the US election. A recent trip to

[redacted] 1.4b, 1.4d detainees brought a good sign of increasing [redacted] 1.4b, 1.4d

50:00

Interview

~~(C)~~ In January, there was no clear intent to conduct operations in Basra. Our top issue was the Mosul Dam, and I went to survey the dam with [redacted] (b)(6) [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6) and [redacted] (b)(6) from the Department of State. We toured the dam and saw the grouting chambers they use. The peshmerga were guarding the dam. The dam had had an attack on the access bridge. Things generally seemed okay. The commander of the 2nd IA Division, General Mutka, wanted us to join him for a tour of downtown Mosul. He wanted to demonstrate that Mosul was in the control of 2nd Division. We were at the dam in the morning and left about 1600 and walked through the market about closing time. We were greeted by friendly folks in the market and it did seem that little untoward happening in Mosul.

[redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6) pulled out a PDA to check dates, and it showed considerable organization.

~~(C)~~ We flew back on 18 January, so we were on the ground on 16-17 January. I think this visit was on 18 January. We had been at the dam on 16 and 17 January, and then flew back. When we left on the 18th, there was a series of explosions and the mortar rounds began reigning on the FOB, which suggested things were not as rosy as General Mukta had intended. A week later, we went back up to deal with more issues, for a Crisis

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Action Committee meeting in Mosul. The PM, the NSA, and (b)(6) went up to the Ninewa (C) Operations Center and met with the Ninewa governor and the 3rd ACR commander. They presented a plan. The next big thing was for the ISF and the CF to prepare deliberately for operations in Mosul. The PM announced this would be "the ultimate battle against AQI."

(C) Events led to another CAC meeting two weeks later here. The Rabiya Port of Entry became a concern. Rehashed what had not been fixed before.

(C) We held a third CAC meeting at the end of February, in which they presented a plan in the PM NOC at which he was satisfied with the intention for Mosul.

(U) I was on leave from the 1st week of March through the 21st. On 23 March, we had the eruption of IDF in the IZ. I found out troops were moving to Basra. (b)(6) asked for help getting to Najaf, and I went with him (b)(6) and three other Iraqis from his staff.

(C) 10:00. He met with members of the OMS to negotiate a settlement for the Basra fight. That came out later as the nine-point plan, which was the same that came out earlier that I had sent to the MNFI leadership. At that point, (b)(6) said that he had met with a number of folks, (b)(6) and Muqtada al-Sadr, and discussed this with them. Unfortunately, the PM could not accept all nine points, and so the fight continued without a negotiated settlement, and as we now know, the ISF was ultimately successful in clearing militias from [Basra], and inducing most of the population to surrender heavy weapons and uncovered a huge number of caches and regained control of the ports. It is not certain there was ever a clear vision for the way ahead.

(C) With all the IDF in the IZ, the embassy staff all moved into the embassy. The number and the size of the rockets went up. These attacks pushed the PM toward pushing a settlement in Sadr City. This drove the push to clear the southern third of Sadr City. Losing this area meant the IDF cells were out of range for the 107mm rockets, and they increasingly used 122mm and 240mm rockets launched from farther out. The 107 has a max range of 9 km. They'd been pushed out of Tharwa. I think we had a 240 impact today. As a result of these operations, IDF effectiveness is down considerably.

(C) The T-walls prevent all attacks on the IZ except for IDF. The Green Zone only suffers sporadically.

16:15. Earlier in the year, there was a suspected hand grenade attack on the US HMMWV parked in front of the Central Criminal Court of Iraq, but I think perhaps that was a friendly accident that somebody failed to take accountability for.

(C) Now, the T-walls cut off the lower portions of Sadr City, the southwest most portion of Sadr City.
JSS Tharwa.

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(C) 21:17. As we've installed this t-wall barrier, we're now able to provide humanitarian (C) assistance to this side of the barrier with relative impunity.

(S/NF) 21:30. One of the things that I think has been most sad about this whole thing is that JAM's desire to wield political power is greater than any desire to see the people helped. So JAM wields terror to exercise political control. It provides jobs and social services, and people have relied on JAM for social services, and JAM keeps the GoI from providing services and employment. The GoI has the ability to survive, but there is a capacity problem.

(S/NF) 23:32. (b)(6) who is Shia by sect but very secular by decision, finds it very unsettling, although he has been involved in a number of efforts to negotiate by Muqtada al Sadr's folks. In addition to the meeting in Najaf, he has met with OMS folks, at the behest of the Government, inside of Baghdad on at least three occasions and has brought their proposals back, and each time has been rebuffed, because JAM is asking for a huge show of faith from the government. They're demanding the government pull back for as little as fourteen, or at least four days of complete removal from Sadr City in order to begin negotiations. Because both the ISF and the CF have been able to press the fight on the SGs, the fight has continued while JAM tries to salvage their political ambitions.

It is a particular problem, I think, that JAM is both inside government with parliamentary seats, and outside government with a militia demanding special treatment.

(S/NF) 25:00. And I think it is clear that JAM could not do this without outside influences. Sadr City lacks the resources for this fight. Dr. Taraq Abdulla. PM. Chief . .

1.4b, 1.4d

(S/NF) In the actual delivery, Dr. Taraq repackaged the evidence to make it look like it was all Iraqi in origin. This was an effort to avoid stoking tensions even higher.

1.4b, 1.4d

(S/NF) The effort to negotiate controls has to be done by the Prime Minister.

(C) 33:40. The PMNOC (The Prime Minister's National Operations Center) continues to improve. They've been given and accepted more responsibilities. They still lack a sense of urgency. They have a hard time deciding or committing without (b)(6) There

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are no other senior leaders or authorities within the PM NOC in the evening, so we can't address serious issues with the Iraqi leadership in the evening.

(C) [redacted] (b)(6) has had run ins with leadership. He can't exceed comfort levels much. His view of the Council of Representatives is that there is not enough regional representation. He is also the chair of the Iraqi Election Commission. The next elections will see a shift in power.

(C) My successor will be [redacted] (b)(3), (b)(6) My group of LNOs to the PMNOC is shrinking. In June 2007, we had 6 officers, 4 sergeants, and 5 interpreters. In June, we'll be down to 3 officers and 1 sergeant.

(C) 41:30. The impact of that is that our liaison will be much less successful. It will be more difficult to diffuse confrontations. It will be harder to have frank discussions over chai or over a meal because we simply don't have the manpower. The span of influence will decrease.

(C) Out of the entire STRATOPS, the Combined Arms Division and the teams at the MoD and the MoI have taken the largest personnel hit. There is no MNFI presence at the MoI. The MoD is attempting to increase presence. The MoD retains a colonel, lieutenant colonel, and three majors.

Are you significantly more invested in this now than you were a year ago?

(C) 44:10. Oh, absolutely. The . . . and I think that is why I describe what I see as unfortunate, because the Iraqi people are really good folks, so it is difficult to turn away at this point, and as much as I need to be back home and do the things with my family that make America what it is, it is difficult to leave knowing that the job here is not finished, because it is important. I think that the things we are doing here are essential. The election, I think, has probably got me the most concerned, because I am not certain that even my leaving is going to be the end of the matter. I think that we could pull out of here as a nation leaving Iraq in somewhat challenged straights, depending on the outcome of the election. So, that part is hard.

You are a very successful officer. You are used to seeing goals and going out and achieving them. But this is something that you are having to rely more on others for.

(C) 45:30. Yes, very much so, and that is actually something that I've gotten used to, since I came to this from being an ROTC PMS.

(S/REL ACGU) One other thing. [redacted] 1.4b, 1.4d

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