INTERVIEW
OF
MAJ. GENERAL JAMES SIMMONS
DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL
MULTINATIONAL CORPS-IRAQ
JANUARY 2, 2008
BAGHDAD, IRAQ

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PROCEDINGS

This is the Multinational Corps Iraq Historian.

Today is Wednesday, the 2nd of January 2008, and we are at the al Faw Palace, Headquarters of Multinational Corps Iraq, outside of Baghdad, Iraq.

It is approximately 11:28.

I am here interviewing the Deputy Commanding General for Support, Major General Simmons.

Sir, just to validate the recording, could you introduce yourself in your own voice?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Major General James Simmons.

Great. Thank you, sir.

I would like to refer the listener to the previous oral history interview that was done on the 18th of June 2007 as a companion piece to this interview. Sir, if it is acceptable to you, we had previously had a release agreement on file. If that is good for you, we will just consider that to still be in effect.

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Okay.
Thank you, sir.

Sir, I wanted to ask kind of a big broad-brushed question first, if I could, especially given the continued dramatic changes of events since we spoke last.

Where at this point do you see the center of gravity in the campaign?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, I think that, you know, based on the execution of the surge and the -- both with U.S. forces, the [1.4b, 1.4d] brigades coming in, and then the significant increase in the Iraqi Security Forces, we have created an environment that is secure enough for local leaders, Iraqi leaders, to start filling the gap on providing services and leadership in Iraqi communities.

Based upon that aspect, it has enabled the provincial governments to start working somewhat more effectively.

I think the center of gravity right now is really at the central government of Iraq coming to an understanding of how to meet the national level needs of the Iraqi people in the areas of governance,
economics, education, and security.

I think that, if the violence level remains where it is or if it continues to decline based on intelligence driven combat operations, then the Iraqi government has a window of opportunity to fulfill those requirements.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Thank you, sir.

Sir, I wanted to ask a little bit about the relationship between MNFI and MNCI. Of course, one of the basic level issues is MNCI is based on 3 Corps, and MNFI has individual augmentees that rotate in and out.

Just as you have seen that changeover in MNFI staff, has that caused any realignment of the relationships of the areas of responsibility between MNCI and MNFI?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: The short answer is no. I think of more interest from a history perspective, though, I think that we have clearly demonstrated throughout the sustained operations here once we stood up the Corps structure in 2004 through the conclusion -- or the conclusion of 2007 in
particular -- is that it is imperative that you have a corps headquarters whenever you are conducting major combat operations.

Corps headquarters are what translates the strategy into tactics. So that operational bridge that exists between those two is absolutely imperative in an environment as complex as you find on a battlefield or in an counter-insurgency operation.

The idea that somehow you can translate that from the four-star level, strategic political level, down to the division commander level without that intermediary headquarters to refine, develop, bridge that operational gap -- people that think that way, in my personal opinion, are mistaken in their understanding of war.

Napoleon head it correct. Frederick the Great had it correct. Eisenhower, Bradley, all of those guys had it right. The corps headquarters it the bridging headquarters that allows that translation to take place, and really empowers the division commanders to have freedom of action in their battle spaces.
Has that played out well, in your mind, during this period?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: In my opinion, this particular corps headquarters has probably -- Well, I do believe, has demonstrated at a level of proficiency that has probably not been replicated, in my humble opinion, since probably World War II, of which 8th Corps or 3 Corps might be good World War II examples of how an effective corps commander and an effective corps staff made that bridge during that period of time.

I think it is a combination of the experience of the commander, the experiences of the corps staff that have all come together at the right time and place to create a headquarters that is -- It is efficient.

While efficiencies are not necessarily all that important in combat, it is an efficient organization, but much more important than that, it is an incredibly effective headquarters, and not just providing resources and prioritizing resources to the subordinate division commanders, but clearly...
establishing the combat priorities and the constant
analysis of the enemy and the moving locations of
where the threat is here in Iraq, as a result shifting
the priority and trying to stay ahead of the bow wave
as the insurgency has moved about.

Sir, in your area of
observation, again defining those different areas of
responsibility for MNCI and MNFI, have there been
areas that were the areas of which there was the most
discussion concerning what the way ahead was in
particular areas, knowing that those two entities had
different focuses? If so, can you give me a sense of
what has engendered the most discussion about finding
that right way ahead?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Two areas leap to
mind right away, and that is the development of the
Concerned Local Citizens. I believe that, you know,
there was some understanding at the tactical level
that this was something that had some potential. So
this is translating it in reverse.

It came from the tactical level. An
understanding was gained at the corps level, and then
that was translated so that the Force commander and his staff and the government of Iraq could embrace the idea.

So that would be one, and I do think the Concerned Local Citizens and their impact in the local communities, starting out in Al Anbar, has made a significant difference here.

The other area is one in the area of logistics and one that probably will not get a whole lot of study as people look at it. But, you know, once again we rebuilt the airplane while it was flying, in that we transitioned to a different logistics organization and structure during this rotation over here.

We came in with the 13th Sustainment Command, who had made a partial transition to the new structure, and that was followed up by the 316th and the 1st TSC down in Theater Sustainment Command down in Kuwait.

What that has done, it has provided support to the divisions based on an area support basis, irregardless of the patch that the Sustainment
Brigade has been wearing on their shoulder. As a result, we now have the visibility for how to deliver equipment, how to deliver personnel, how to deliver supplies with as few stops from the source to the user as I think it is probably reasonable to do on a battlefield.

As a result of that, we have been able to field more equipment -- for example, the MRAPs, the mine-resistant vehicles that we are bringing in to counter the IED threat. We have been able to field those at a very rapid pace while being able to get training for the crews and logistics training for the maintenance personnel or maintenance training for the maintenance personnel at a much faster rate than we would have been able to do under the old traditional system that we came into the war with.

So I think those two areas are two good examples of the Corps Headquarters being that bridging example that we talked about.

(b)(3), (b)(6): As far as looking to certain areas that are either in the midst of being merged to some degree or on consideration to be
merged, can you speak to that evolution in terms of areas of joint responsibility?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, I think it is fairly easy to merge the functions of the one -- the personnel functions into one, because those are almost entirely administrative in nature, and to reduce the redundancy between the two staffs.

I think there is quite a bit of synergy in merging the logistics staffs between the two organizations, but I do believe there are some things from a logistics perspective that will have to be retained at the Force Commander's level, but most of the day to day, log cap normal logistics activities can be; migrated into the Corps Headquarters, and there will be some probably savings of people there.

I also believe there is ability for some merging, probably some significant merging, in the areas of intelligence. Where I don't see the ability to do much merging is in the areas of operations, in the 3 shop.

I also think there is a distinct difference in the 5 functions at the Force level and
the 5/9 functions that go on at the Corps. So you
know, at the Force level I see the predominant staff
section at the Force being the 5, and the predominant
staff section at the Corps being the 3.

So I don't think you can have a successful
merging in those areas because of the different focus
and levels of emphasis at the two different
headquarters.

(b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, in a broader sense
-- you kind of touched on it a little bit with regard
to the Sustainment Command, but you also have purview
over some of the other entities that have moved and
continue to migrate in terms of their structure and
the modularity of the Army. I'm thinking of military
intelligence, signal.

IN general, the fact that we are already
in the midst of some of these transformations as we
are fighting the fight here, has that worked out?
What kind of advantages and disadvantages has that
brought us on the battlefield?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, the Signal
community -- you know, whenever we crossed the berm in
2003, we had Signal -- two Signal brigades, I guess, and six Signal battalions that were providing operational and tactical columns for the Force as we made the march to Baghdad.

Through commercialization, the fielding of the joint nodal network and the CPN structures, we are now down to two Signal battalions under a single Signal brigade, providing services here across all of Iraq, uninterrupted services, both Internet and voice columns on an instantaneous basis.

Part of that has been technology, but most of that has been commercialization and organization, and it is seamless from the joint perspective at the Force level all the way down to the tactical level. So that one I have -- The transformation on that piece of it with the JNN system and everything has worked very well.

The Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, which we converted here whenever we changed out the 504th and brought in the 525th, is not a complete transformation yet. It is a hybrid right now.

The human piece is working very well. The
Signet piece is getting better every day and getting more capable every day. The use of UAVs in ARISTA mode and in an ISR mode, I think, has pretty much been worked to a level of fidelity that I don't think anybody foresaw in 2003.

Coupled with the UAV is the manned/unmanned teaming aspect that we are doing now, and it is not a machine-to-machine interface. It is a combination of things that have happened that is, in some ways, generational as opposed to something that is just military in nature.

The UAV operators and managers, for the most part, are very young, and they are very comfortable with entering into Internet chat rooms and moving information in a language that most of us don't understand.

As a result, when they see something that the UAV is picking up, they pass that information through these chat rooms to the battle space owner or battle captain, also usually a fairly young person, who interprets that, understands what the situation is on the ground, and then flexes a TAC aircraft or
reconnaissance aircraft, armed reconnaissance aircraft, to the site, and then it is hand-off to a manned platform who then, in conjunction with the battle space owner, makes a decision as to whether or not to engage the target.

That aspect of it is revolutionary on the battlefield, and it is well ahead here of what most of the doctrine folks and the force development folks back in CONUS actually think.

We are well beyond the theory on this, and we are doing this every single day out here, and part of it is just because of the great young people that we have. But this is a breakthrough.

This will fundamentally change the way you do combat operations forever, and I'm not sure that everybody has grasped the significance of that yet, but I will tell you that it is a huge battlefield advantage that our Force has because of that development.

Combat Aviation is another area. This is the second helicopter war. I don't care how you want
to break it out. Vietnam was the first helicopter
war, but this is the second helicopter war, and we do
not do any kind of combat operations here without
tactical rotary wing aviation coverage for that
operation. Again, most of this manned/unmanned
teaming with UAVs is done with helicopters.

The amount of flying hours that we have
flown this year, which is over 500,000 and something
that most people do not think was sustainable from a
maintenance perspective -- in other words, being able
to produce that many flying hours through phased
maintenance -- The safety record is the best. It is
actually lower than it is in the units that are not
employed in combat, both in the Army and in the Marine
Corps.

The effects on the battlefield, the
incredible responsiveness in firepower, the additional
acquisition capability that you have through the
target acquisition systems on the aircraft have
enabled the ground commander to have a set of manned
eyes to look at something, and then have the lethality
to take the target out if it needs to be taken out,
that we have not had on the battlefield before.

The amount and the method of moving soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines around the battlefield is primarily done by rotary wing aircraft. The amount of cargo that is moved, high priority cargo that is moved by these platforms is absolutely astounding whenever you break out the numbers, and it is not the normal, day to day logistical stuff.

I'm talking about the high priority stuff that's got to get there now, and that is managed that way.

Then the flexibility that you get from both UH-60s, CH-47s, 53s and 46s to do air assault operations, to go into an area in which the enemy thinks is a sanctuary in the middle of the night, zero elimination, has given us a tactical advantage over the enemy to be able to strike them with total surprise that we have not achieved on any other battlefield.

So I think that one is a huge victory.

And, oh, by the way, from the loss recover launch we have consolidated UAVs under these aviation formations
as well, which has significantly reduced the accident rate and given us more eyes in the sky as we have worked our way through that aspect of it.

So those three areas are significant. I also think that the advances that we have made in battlefield medicine has also fundamentally changed combat. We've got the highest survivability rate of any war from our folks that are severely wounded by getting them to the appropriate level of care rapidly through our Medivac aircraft, and then the outstanding surgical care that our soldiers get in these combat support hospitals.

There are two other aspects of the medical side of this thing that I think are huge changes. The first one is we put physical therapists in the brigade combat teams. That has reduced the number of soldiers that had been evacuated out of theater, because the physical therapists have been able to treat injuries in combat that, through exercise programs and rehabilitative programs, have been able to keep the soldiers in the fight. So I think that one has been huge, a lesson that we learned from the Special Ops...
community.

The other area that we are spending a lot of time and effort on is on the mental health side of it, which I think is going to have positive long term effects in that we are going to have less folks going into the VA system 10-15 years from now suffering from the effects of combat than what we have had in the past.

We are not where we need to be yet on that one, but we are making strides in the right direction. So I think that has had a huge impact on what we do as well.

The other one, though, that is a sustained plus has been the efforts of our EOD forces under Task Force [Boxed区域内]. Those folks have just done a magnificent job in the counter-IED fight, and the number of soldiers' lives that have been saved through the fielding of the right kind of equipment, through the outstanding support that our EOD companies provide down to the BCTs has been remarkable, coupled with the Corps engineers and the engineer groups that are in divisions with the route clearance effort, the
bridging efforts for enhanced mobility in the theater,
I think, have all coupled together to empower the
Force to be able to go wherever we need to go and have
a freedom of maneuver here that has been, for the most
part, incapable of being interrupted by the enemy.

(b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, you were talking
about the aviation aspect of this and, in particular,
as the senior aviator. One of the things that has
changed since we talked last is there is a fairly
recent reduction in the overall number of helicopters
we have at our disposal. How has that worked itself
out, and have you played a key role in working that
our or was that something that was developed at a
different level?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, I've been
involved in it, and I guess there's probably a lot of
people in different places that say I have been the
principal person involved in it, but it has really
been a staff effort, a team effort, with
(b)(3), (b)(6)
(Phonetic) and the guys in the C-3 Aviation shop,
(b)(3), (b)(6)
in the C-3, the four aviation brigade
commanders, the Marine air wing commander, all working
together to figure out how we can support three maneuver divisions, Multinational Force West, the Marine forces that are here, and the missions at the Corps level with the reduction of basically two-thirds of a brigade's worth of aircraft.

So the solution was we would take the number of battalions that we had, but we had to have four aviation brigade headquarters and a Marine air wing headquarters to be able to do the effective planning and coordination for the combat operation.

We tailored a force with the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade as the headquarters. That was the Corps Aviation Brigade headquarters. We moved that down to MNDB, gave them the 4th Squadron of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment with 24 M-10s, Apaches and 10 Blackhawks, and then took 18 additional Blackhawks and the 3d Battalion of the 158th Aviation Regiment and moved them down to Taji as well to support MNDB.

We also took an attack company from the 2d of the 159th and moved them down to Taji to support combat operations in Baghdad as well.

Then we brought in Task Force 142, brigade
headquarters out of Alaska, to pick up the Corps mission, folks of Brigade headquarters, and they are doing the Corps mission with what is left of the 2d of the 159th. That gives them the capability to put 16 Apaches up.

The 5th Battalion of the 158th, it's actually a -- with the Chinooks, Blackhawks and medivac to be able to support the Corps functions and support OCFI and CJSOTF, and the maintenance battalion, the 412th ASB, who is supporting both of those two brigades.

So as a result, we have been able to mitigate some of the effects of losing plus aircraft in the theater.

Are we as capable as we were before? No. Do we have the capability to sustain the fight at its current levels? Yes, but it does mean that we are going to have to be much more efficient and effective at producing flight hours through our phased maintenance programs in order to be able to sustain that.

So right now I would say we've got a good...
Band-Aid on the problem, and we'll see here over the next several months if that Band-Aid is sufficient or not to sustain the operations over time.

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

On the aviation side, sir, one of the new equipment fieldings that's happened, at least out west, has been the MB-22 tough rotor system. Have you had any visibility on that fielding?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, yes. I was with the Marine air wing the other day, three days ago, got a good lay-down on what they've done with the Osprey.

A tremendously capable platform. You know, we are going through the crawl, walk, run stage of how to integrate it into combat operations. I think the potential for the machine is fairly significant, but you know, inside the Marine Corps this is going to take some lessons learned and some reviews on tactics, techniques and procedures, nocturnal revisions; because you've got such an incredibly different capability.

It does do some of the same things that
you did before, but it gives you such incredible flexibility of moving some things that -- you know, better than 240 knots of airspeed, that you were doing at 110 knots before, and you got much longer legs with the capability of being able to do it.

I don't know how long it is going to take before we figure out exactly what the optimum use of it is, but what we have seen so far is definitely sustainable in combat, and it gives great flexibility to the commander of Multinational Forces West.

(b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, another key item fielding here -- and you have mentioned here a little bit earlier, but I wanted to talk more about the MRAP acquisition and fielding -- certainly, when you look at this period of time, something that's come online.

Can you talk to me a little bit about what the decision process was and what the challenges have been, and where are we in the fielding process?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, first of all, we just came to the conclusion that the 1114-1151, we were sustaining too high casualties on the battlefield to be satisfied with that as a platform, and we had
reached the weight and safety limits of the vehicle
with all the armor we put on it.

We had, with our route clearance teams,
vehicles that were resistant to IEDs. We had about
537 of them here in the Corps, and the Marines led the
fight on this and said we need more of these kind of
vehicles out west where they were primarily dealing
with the deep and buried threat.

So the Marines started the program of
replacing some of their vehicles with these MRAP
vehicles, and then we identified a requirement for a
one-for-one replacement of the 114-1151s in the
Corps.

As the procurement decision was made, it
is, of course, incremental because it is a procurement
decision, and subsequent decisions were made about how
many forces we were going to have in theater.

Basically, so far we at the Corps have
fielded three different variants of the vehicle.
We've had four vehicles that have been hit by IEDs
since we've started the fielding, and we have had no
serious casualties in any of those. In fact, two of
the vehicles self-recovered back to the FOB.

Soldiers are very excited about them. The noncommissioned officers had figured out the tactics techniques and procedures. We kind of finally settled, though, that they weren't exactly right for every possible mission that you could be involved in.

So we have gone with -- Originally, our plan was 27 MRAPs per company. We have now gone to 18 MRAPs and nine up-armedored Humvees in a company as an interim model as we work our way through the fielding process.

The Marines are up, over 650 vehicles fielded, and we have fielded right around 400 in the Corps. That will increase here. We will start running about 120 a week here starting this week -- fielding a week. So we are rapidly putting those out on the battlefield.

(b)(3),(b)(6): With regard to the M114 up-armedored Humvee, sir, is the process -- One of the processes of the discussion was the transition of those that we were discarding, to transition those over to Iraqi Security Forces?
MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Right. The Iraqis are still, you know, in many cases running around in pick-up trucks. So to be able to more rapidly enhance the capability of Iraqi Security Forces, we are fulfilling a request from the Prime Minister to sell 8500 of the 1114s that we replaced with MRAPs to the Iraqis, and I think that will significantly enhance the capability of the Iraqi forces.

(b)(3), (b)(6): Have you personally been pleased, given the speed of this type of fielding; and besides the program, have you been pleased the type of support from the manufacturers, contractors?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, I think that, for the most part, the contractors have done a superb job. I think the Marine Corps has accepted the ownership of being the Joint Program Office for this, and I think they have done a great job.

SPAWARs down at Charleston has done a great job of gluing these things together, getting all the right government furnished equipment installed on it, and I think the fielding process here in Iraq, both with the Marines out at TQ and with the multiple
facilities that we have here in Iraq for the Corps has been done very, very well, most of that being done under Army Materiel Command.

So, yes, I am pleased with it. More importantly, the platoon sergeants are pleased with it, and that's where the rubber really meets the road. So it appears that we are meeting their requirement.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Sir, changing gears a little bit, I wanted to ask about an area that there is something of a mission overlap and an outcome overlap with regard to detainee operations, knowing that we have a piece in that, of course, and knowing that we have operational units in the field who have to deal with detainees when they are released relative to the battle situation there, also that we have an MP aspect that is involved with that, and we have medical aspect that is involved with that.

What do you see as the biggest challenges that we are facing with the detainee issue, and knowing, too, that there is some level of debate about the best way to do the detainee situation?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, the MP...
brigade that I am responsible for is responsible for police transition training. They have nothing to do with detainee operations. However, I am the conduit from the Corps dealing with Task Force 1.4a and with General Petraeus on the detainee operations.

In particular, the most controversial aspect of that has been about the detainee release piece of it. I think Task Force 1.4a has set up a good process to identify who the irreconcilables are and who the folks are that there is potential for them to be reintegrated back into Iraqi society with some set of job skills and all to give them an opportunity to reject being a part of the insurgency, and becoming meaningful members of the Iraqi civil society.

The tightrope that you walk with the divisions is making sure that you do not release more into the division commander's battle space than what they can find guaranteed sponsors for out in their battle space.

Then that is coupled with an understanding that the United Nations Security Council resolution will run out on December 31st of next year, and that
we have kind of a mandate at that point to do detainee business in a different way.

So we have adequate detention facilities. We are building two more, but I believe over the next several months we will reduce the detainee population by a number. I don't know what that number is. It could be 4,000, could be 8,000.

It could be a little bit higher than that. But I think the secret to it is or the key aspect of it is that we've got a cooperative process between us and the Force and Task Force 14a of coming up with a methodology that allows the division commanders to have a vote in how many detainees get released into their battle space on a daily basis.

If we come to the appropriate resolution on that, it will be manageable, and it will be a success story. If we screw it up, then we are going to end up with creating additional stress on the forces in the areas where we released large numbers of these detainees.

(b)(3), (b)(6): Has there been a risk to detainees in terms of when the operational commanders
-- I'm trying to think of the best way to ask this question. Some of the reports about detainees that don't have sponsors or the safety of detainees when they are released, if there not some system in place -- how big a concern has that been? Can you speak at all to that?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, I mean, honestly, there are bad people that are in our custody that the local Iraqis -- in many cases, these guys are the leaders of criminal gangs versus so much about being a part of al Qaeda or some kind of rogue Shia element. They are leaders of criminal gangs, and the local Iraqis do not want them released back into their area.

The problem with it is that, in most cases, we do not have any kind of evidence that says these are criminals. What we have is intelligence that says these are people that were contributing to the insurgency.

So, yes, there is a challenge in the local Iraqi community whenever these folks are released that they want them policed up by the Iraqi police and then
incarcerated under Iraqi law.

As long as that is done legally and in accordance with the judicial system that is set up with the Iraqi system -- you know, that means they have been released, and they did something nefarious, and they were arrested under criminal law -- then those processes are okay.

I think the ones that we get concerned about is the rumors that are going around that, you know, there is local justice that is dealt out with these folks whenever they arrive back in their community.

The truth is that we do not have any significant evidence that that is going on. It appears that it is a rumor, and we are always trying to get at the bottom of rumors, but we haven't been able to produce any significant evidence on it.

(b)(3), (b)(6): Changing gears again, sir, I wanted to ask about a development of Op Plan 08-01, which just was published on the 28th of December.

I just wanted to ask, in the broader
sense, what your role in the development of that Op Plan was, and again from your area of focus what are the key aspects of 08-01?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Primarily, you know, in looking at the roles and missions of the 17 brigade size formations, that is all underneath my purview, the logistical aspects of it, the aviation aspects of it, the engineering requirements that have been levied on it, how that works with the creation of a civilian service corps, what role the Corps Engineer Brigade provides in helping to develop that. Those are the kind of portions of the plan that I had some small part in working out.

Of course, right now I am in the process of taking the back-briefs from the subordinate commanders on how they intend to carry out the Commander's intent in the execution of this Op Plan.

Looking ahead to the rest of 2008 and the idea that we will draw down to pre-surge levels, what are the biggest challenges you are seeing from unit support, logistics standpoint of how to best draw down? What do you see as the biggest
piece of that?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, transportation is always the biggest issue. I mean, you are going to continue to do RIP TOAs with units, and so as a result you are going to do that normal transition, and then you have accelerated some outflow of equipment and people. So as a result, you are managing limited quantities of transportation resources to do all that.

So it works fine. We've got a great staff that figures it out. But if you look at it abstractly and said, wow, this is a tough thing, you could be overwhelmed by it. But we've already got systems in place to manage it. So that is one aspect of it.

The other thing is making sure that people understand we are not actually vacating the battle space. We are thinning the lines out in some areas, but for the most part, we are still going to be covering down the same battle space that we were covering over before. We are not giving up any battle space as we go through this process.

I think that's kind of key to what it is
that we are doing. In many cases, you know, we might have had a brigade there, and we will end up with a battalion or two there, and it includes members of the Iraqi Security Forces.

So I think in the end it is the right time. The security levels are right to start looking at this, but it is going to take time to get back down to that number of brigades.

(b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, I wanted to ask a couple of questions, if I could, on the benign kinetic side of things, in that there has been a couple of areas that all of our senior leaders have been engaged with.

One of those is the senior leader engagement with the media. Again, looking as an outsider, it kind of seems as though we have made more headway in being able to get the story told back home to our own public about the job we are doing over here.

Any sense for what your role in that has been? Have you seen that have an impact? Is it just my perception or have you seen any changes in the way
we have been able to get that word out?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, first of all, I think at the most senior levels there is an acknowledgment that the free press in a democratic society is of equal importance to the military in a combat zone.

The free press holds people accountable, holds governments accountable. It holds generals accountable, and the American people have a right to know about what is going on over here, and a free press is absolutely instrumental in doing that.

Making leaders at all levels, not just at senior levels, at all levels available to the press, I think, is the right thing to do. Now I do not think -- this is my personal opinion. I still do not think that we have the American people being properly informed of the heroic activities of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines on the battlefield.

I think this is a failing of our press. I think we -- There are no Ernie Pyles in this war. There is no one out there that is reporting on Company C of the 16th Infantry to a level of detail that the
American people feel like they know soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines.

This is the first time since the Revolutionary War that we've gone to war with an all volunteer force, and the American people do not have a face and name attached to the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines that are over here fighting this fight.

The other aspect of it is that our media press, in particular, has transitioned to sensational and temporary reporting on big events, with very little analysis associated with it, and as a result, it is a headline. It's a ticker across the bottom of a screen and somebody standing someplace reporting on something, and in many cases they are not even where the event actually took place.

It's just kind of creating an image that they are sending back home. I don't think that is necessarily the right way that the American people would want the press to be reporting the fight.

What I find is that the more you engage the media and the more you can get the media down with
soldiers, the youngsters out there on the battlefield, then the more accurate the reporting becomes.

So you have to work at building a relationship with folks in the media, just like you do with building relationships with anybody else. I'm not -- It is much more critical probably than what we are emphasizing in our education right now.

(b)(3), (b)(6): One of the things General Odierno highlighted in particular, sir, was the idea of more engagement with the Arab media. Have you had a chance to experience that personally, and have you see any results from that?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: I have on several occasions briefed both the western and Arab media on IEDs, on helicopter shootdowns, on those kinds of activities that some people would say I'm a subject matter expert on.

Most of the time, what I find is that there is some urban legend or myths that have been developed out there, and people just don't have a real good understanding of what it is that you are doing and how you are going about it.
In a lot of cases, what it ends up doing is killing a story instead of it becoming a story, that you know, they have turned over a rock; they think there are some worms under it, but then whenever you inform them and actually answer their questions -- that's another thing that is kind of important to dealing with the press -- is that there is not really a story here.

(b)(3), (b)(6): I'm not sure how much visibility you have on this, sir, but if you do, I would be interested to know your thoughts. Again, on the non-kinetic is the Information Operations side of our process.

Looking back on the Corps, sir, of now to the end of the tour, have you had -- do you have a sense for the effectiveness of our IO campaign? Has that changed over the course of time, and do you have any sense for is it better or worse? If it is better, what are we doing differently that is working for us?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, I think it's a lot better than it was whenever we got here, because I'm not really sure we had an understanding of what we
needed to do.

I think the IO team has done a magnificent job in making sure that they separated out information operations and public affairs stuff. I do think that we have gotten better at transmitting messages to the Iraqi people through the information ops channels that has made a difference. That is to inform them about what is really going on in their country with regard to al Qaeda in particular and special groups in general. I do think it has had a positive impact on how the Iraqi people have viewed those particular groups.

It's hard work. It is some of the harder work that we do.

(b)(3). (b)(6): Intelligence, sir:

Knowing that, certainly at the General Officer level, being able to have intelligence feeds that you are comfortable with to help shape your decision making process -- again, when you look at that now, looking back here in the last six weeks of the assignment of 3 Corps at MNIC, how have you seen the intelligence support for decisions you have needed to make, and has
that changed at all over time?

In other words, have different streams of intelligence proved to be more predominant as the fight has gone on?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, first of all, I think [redacted] has done two things. The Intelligence has done two things.

One, he is, without doubt, the best intelligence officer that I have ever known. He is able to use his staff to figure out trends through analysis that says, you know, this is the direction that the enemy is going, and providing the necessary information, data, intelligence to allow General Odierno and, in some cases, myself to make informed decisions about how to counter an enemy capability or how to defeat an enemy capability or how to kill or capture high value targets.

The other aspect of that, though, is that I think [redacted] has probably exhibited one of the best examples of senior level leadership that I have ever watched as he has molded his team, created a sense of cooperation with the intelligence staff at
the Force level, and a sense of partnership with the intelligence staffs at the division and brigade levels that is built on trust and confidence in one another.

I think a lot of times we look over -- or overlook that set of leadership skills that this particular Colonel had at this particular time and place on this fight, and I think it has made a huge difference.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Do you feel as though the specific channels, -- Has your reliance on any of those shifted over the course of time?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Yes, they have, but they ebb and flow. You know, at one time full motion video will be important.

So what I would say is you got to have a holistic approach to the intelligence piece of it, and

(b)(3), (b)(6)
actually the wrong way to go. You've got to have a holistic picture, the whole package together.

We've gone through several cycles here.

(b)(3), (b)(6): You touched on a number of technology things. Knowing that you have a lot of areas that have oversight of technology, are there any other key technology that you think we will look back on that have been introduced during this period that we haven't talked about?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: The techniques that we have employed to impact on the enemy's ability to use indirect fire, I think, is something that we haven't talked a lot about -- you know, with

We just kind of take it as a matter of fact that those kind of things are going to happen, and it's actually a lot of hard work that goes into making it happen.

Precision indirect fires, I think, is another area that has made significant impact here on
the battlefield.

This is one of those, I don't know exactly how to say it: Airspace management probably would be the way to say it, how to more efficiently and effectively manage the airspace matters, and you ought to base your management of the airspace off of what your most lethal killers are, not based off of what some doctrinal expert has figured out back at Langley Air Force Base.

(b)(3), (b)(6) So that is actually --

That is a very interesting point, and that's something I didn't think to ask you, but I know was a concern at one point as to how do we control the airspace? How do we coordinate with the Air force on how to come to an agreement on that?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: I think we have pretty much got it worked out. What I would say is that the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Army are in violent agreement.

So if three of the four services are in violent agreement on how to do something, then the Air Force as a minimum should be asking themselves, if
these there guys are all dead set that this is a way
to do it, we at least ought to be flexible enough to
entertain their ideas and thoughts.

Once we got over that hurdle, then
everything kind of started coming together, and this
is something that needs to be pointed out. This is
not an argument with Air Force guys that are in
theater. The guys that are in theater see the same
problems that the Navy, Air Force and marines see in
theater.

This is a problem that is created, because
the CFAC guy ain't here. If he was here, then this
problem would go away, because he would be living and
breathing this stuff every day as opposed to being
somewhere else doing something else.

When you talk about
command and control in general, there is that awkward
element in that we have commanders in theater, but the
aviation assets that come from the Air Force side are
not under that umbrella. Is that something that has
been discussed?
MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Many times, and this is in no way, shape, form or fashion to discredit the airmen that are operating here on the ground and in the air over Iraq. But I would tell you that, in my opinion -- this is my opinion -- the idea that you are going to fight from some fricking remote location and that you are somehow able to ascertain what is going on here in the battlefield is ludicrous. It's just like UAVs. The guy that has to control the UAVs is the guy that owns the sensor and shooter. One guy has to own both of them, if you are going to employ them in lethal operations. That is not some guy sitting in a control station 10,000 miles away. It just doesn't work.

So those are all my opinions. I do believe that I am the General Officer that has the most flight time in Iraq as a General Officer. So I'm out there listening to the radios every day.

I am going to leave out of this interview and I am going to go climb in my helicopter and I'm flying to Balad today. You know, I listen to the ground commanders. I listen to the fighter pilots.
I hear it all over the radio, and I know exactly where
the rough points are, and the guys that aren't here
doing that don't know what they are.

I don't care what they think. They are
dealing on theory. They are not actually dealing with
wiggling the sticks around in the air. I don't have
-- I don't place a whole lot of credibility in their
comments.

(b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, are thee any last
thoughts that I haven't asked you about that you are
free to comment on?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, this is one
that I -- We all stand on the shoulders of some
incredible young fellows that do really unbelievable
stuff every day, and they don't know it. They think
what they are doing is what any normal American would
do under the same circumstances, and I'm just not sure
that is true.

I think they are extraordinary people. I
do believe they are the next greatest generation of
Americans, and I believe they have accepted
responsibility for their country and, no matter how
long they serve, I believe they will reintegrate themselves back into American society, whether it is after a three-year enlistment or after 20 years or after 30 years, and I think they will accept responsibility for the communities that they live in.

I think they are going to fundamentally change America. I think we are once again seeing what an incredible nation we are a part of that produces young people that are able to do the kinds of things that these do.

Their bravery is absolutely unbelievable. They are the most intelligent, most informed group of soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines that have ever been anywhere.

If they don't personally know something, they know to acquire the information over the Internet, and it makes them incredibly well informed whenever it comes to doing what they do.

I'm incredibly proud of them. I'm terribly honored to have been able to serve with them. It has been the highlight of my military life to be able to spend some time and be around them.
The other thing I would tell you is that I think I've got an advantage over everybody else when it comes to General Officers over here, because in addition to being the DCG of the Corps, I'm a pilot in B Company, and my life is just as intertwined with those young men, women in B Company as it is with the Corps staff and my personal staff up here.

I understand what they go through on a daily basis. I understand the challenges that they've got in their families and in their home life, and I am absolutely amazed every day at the magnificent stuff that they do.

You know, I fly three to four missions a week, because I got to go places, and so I might as well fly myself whenever I go do it. And being able to connect the dots -- you know, I sit through the morning BUA and listen to the Force 2 talk, and then I end up down the next morning getting ready to fly a mission, and I've got the specialist of the 158th S2 section briefing the intelligence picture along the routes that we are going to fly, and it all connects.

That didn't happen before. it happens
because these kids are incredibly talented on mining
data off of our systems. So we are a lot better than
what we think we are. We are much, much better than
what we think we are.

This is going to be an incredibly talented
armed force for a long time because of the experiences
that they have gathered over here. But I've been
associated with this Corps since 1990.

I've known every Corps Commander since
1990. I've known every Chief of Staff of this Corps
since 1990. I've known the Corps staff since 1990,
and this is by far the best group that has ever been
put together to serve as a Corps headquarters at least
since 1990.

It is an incredible thing to be a part of,
and it really is -- I really think it is historical.
Somebody will sooner or later write a book about it,
I think, that will capture the impacts that happened
here. But there has been a lot of great work done.
There is more work to be done, but this outfit has
done their work.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Great, sir. Anything
else?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: No. Thank you.

Thank you, sir.

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Appreciate it.

That concludes this interview with Major General Simmons, Deputy Commanding General for Support.

Again, as a reference, there was an interview on file from the 18th of June 2007 which I reviewed as a precursor to this.

This is the MNCI Historian, on Wednesday, the 2nd of January 2008, at 1235.