



Adjunct Professor of International Affairs

April 25, 2006

**MEMORANDUM FOR: COLONEL MIKE MEESE
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UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY**

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**Subject: Academic Report- Trip to Iraq and Kuwait
Thursday 13 April through Thursday 20 April 2006**

1. PURPOSE: This memo provides follow-on feedback reference visit 13-20 April 2006 to Iraq and Kuwait. Look forward to doing a faculty seminar with Department of Social Sciences at your convenience in the Fall semester.

2. SOURCES – IRAQ:

- a. **General George Casey, Commander, Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I):** One-on-one discussions and briefings.
- b. **LTG Peter Chiarelli, Commander, Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I):** One-on-one discussions and briefings.
- c. **LTG Martin Dempsey, Commander, Multi-National Security Transition Command:** One-on-one discussions and briefings.
- d. **British three-star General LTG Rob Fry (UK Army), Deputy to General George Casey, Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I):** Update Briefings.
- e. **Acting Chief-of-Mission U.S. Embassy, DCM David Satterfield:** One-on-one discussions and briefing.
- f. **MG James Thurman, Commanding General, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad (MND-B):** One-on-one discussions and briefings.
- g. **MG Thomas Turner, Commanding General, 101st Abn Div. Multi-National Division-North (MND-N):** One-on-one discussions and briefings.
- h. **MG Rick Lynch, Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) Strategic Effects:** One-on-one discussions and briefing.
- i. **MG Timothy Donovan, USMC, Chief-of-Staff Multi-National Forces-Iraq:** One-on-one discussions and out brief.
- j. **MG Joseph Peterson, Chief of Iraqi Police Transition:** Discussion and briefing.

- k. **Mr. David Harris, Acting Chief Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO):** One-on-one lunch and discussions.
- l. **MG Bob Heine, Deputy Iraqi Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO), Director of Operations:** One-on-one discussions and briefings.
- m. **BG (P) William H. McCoy, Commanding General, Gulf Region Division Project and Contracting Office:** Full Staff Briefings.
- n. **BG John Cantwell (Australian Army):** MNF-I Operations Brief.
- o. **BG Alessio Cecchetti (Italian Army):** Coalition Operations Update Briefing.
- p. **Mr. Russ Thaden, Deputy Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Multi-National Force-Iraq:** Intelligence briefing on threat.
- q. **Briefing:** Multi-National Force-Iraq Battlefield Update.
- r. **Briefing:** MNF-I Effects and Synchronization Board.
- s. **Division Battle Staff Briefing:** 4th Infantry Division.
- t. **Division Battle Staff Briefing:** 101st Airborne Division.
- u. **Briefing:** Infantry Brigade Commander, 4th Infantry Division.
- v. **Briefing:** Acting Infantry Battalion Commander, 4th Infantry Division.
- w. **Briefing:** Infantry Company Commander, 4th Infantry Division.
- x. **Lunch Sensing Session:** Soldiers and junior NCOs, 4th Infantry Division.
- y. **Dinner Discussion:** General Officers and Division Command Sergeant Major, 101st Airborne Division.
- z. **Briefing:** Infantry Brigade Commander, 101st Airborne Division.
- aa. **Briefing:** Maneuver Effects Brigade Commander (Engineers), 101st Airborne Division on Counter-IED Campaign.
- bb. **Briefing:** Aviation Brigade Commander, 101st Airborne Division.
- cc. **Briefing:** Maneuver Battalion Commander and Company Commanders, 101st Airborne Division.
- dd. **Lunch Sensing Session:** Aviation Company Commander and Leaders, 101st Airborne Division.
- ee. **Dinner Sensing Session:** Soldiers and junior NCOs, 101st Airborne Division.
- ff. **Visit and Briefings:** Brigade Detention Center and Intelligence interrogators.
- gg. **Visit and Briefings:** Special Operations Intelligence Fusion Center.
- hh. **Night Movement:** To 101st Maneuver Battalion Headquarters for pinning ceremony, Combat Infantry and Combat Action Badges. Discussion with junior soldiers.

3. SOURCES – KUWAIT:

- a. **Ambassador Richard LeBaron, US Ambassador to Kuwait:** Office call and discussions with U.S. Ambassador and DCM.
- b. **Staff Briefings:** Colonel David Cordon, Acting Chief, Office of Military Cooperation - Kuwait.
- c. **Briefings:** U.S. Embassy Political Officer.
- d. **Briefings:** U.S. Embassy DAO - LTC Robert Friedenber.
- e. **MG James Kelley, Acting Commanding General, Coalition Land Component Command:** One-on-one discussions.
- f. **Full Staff Briefing:** (3rd U.S. Army), Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC).
- g. **Dinner Discussion:** CFLCC General Officers, Chief-of-staff, Command Sergeant Major.

4. THE BOTTOM LINE - OBSERVATIONS FROM IRAQI FREEDOM, APRIL 2006:

1st - The morale, fighting effectiveness, and confidence of U.S. combat forces continue to be simply awe-inspiring. In every sensing session and interaction - I probed for weakness and found courage, belief in the mission, enormous confidence in their sergeants and company grade officers, an understanding of the larger mission, a commitment to creating an effective Iraqi Army and Police, unabashed patriotism, and a sense of humor. All of these soldiers, NCOs and young officers were volunteers for combat. Many were on their second combat tour - several were on the third or fourth combat tour. Many had re-enlisted to stay with their unit on its return to a second Iraq deployment. Many planned to re-enlist regardless of how long the war went on.

Their comments to me were guileless, positive, and candidly expressed love for their fellow soldiers. They routinely encounter sniper fire, mortar and rocket attacks, and constantly face IED's on movement. Their buddies have been killed and wounded. Several in these sessions had also been wounded. These are the toughest soldiers we have ever fielded. It was a real joy and an honor to see them first-hand.

2nd - The Iraqi Army is real, growing, and willing to fight. They now have lead action of a huge and rapidly expanding area and population. The battalion level formations are in many cases excellent - most are adequate. However, they are very badly equipped with only a few light vehicles, small arms, most with body armor and one or two uniforms. They have almost no mortars, heavy machine guns, decent communications equipment, artillery, armor, or IAF air transport, helicopter, and strike support. Their logistics capability is only now beginning to appear. Their Institutional Army (Military Schools, logistics base, manufacturing) is beginning to show encouraging signs of self-initiative.

The Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior have shown dramatic and rapid growth in capacity and competence since LTG Dempsey took them under his care. However, the corruption and lack of capability of the ministries will require several years of patient coaching and officer education in values as well as the required competencies. The Iraqi people clearly want a National Army. The recruiting now has gotten significant participation by all sectarian groups to include the Sunni. The Partnership Program with U.S. units will be the key to success with the Embedded Training Teams augmented and nurtured by a U.S. Maneuver Commander. This is simply a brilliant success story. We need at least two-to-five more years of U.S. partnership and combat backup to get the Iraqi Army ready to stand on its own. The interpersonal relationships between Iraqi Army units and their U.S. trainers are very positive and genuine.

3rd - The Iraqi police are beginning to show marked improvement in capability since MG Joe Peterson took over the program. The National Police Commando Battalions are very capable - a few are simply superb and on par with the best U.S. SWAT units in terms of equipment, courage, and training. Their intelligence collection capability is better than ours in direct HUMINT.

The crux of the war hangs on our ability to create urban and rural local police with the ability to survive on the streets of this incredibly dangerous and lethal environment. The police must have fortified local stations (more than a thousand), local jails (more than a thousand), armored Humvees (more than 3000), a nationwide command and control system, embedded U.S. contractor trainers, and in the key battleground areas of Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, and Kirkuk - they need a remote area camera monitoring system such as we now have in most of our major cities.

The police are heavily infiltrated by both the AIF and the Shia militia. They are widely distrusted by the Sunni population. They are incapable of confronting local armed groups. They inherited a culture of inaction, passivity, human rights abuses, and deep corruption.

This will be a ten year project requiring patience, significant resources, and an international public face. This is a very, very tough challenge which is a prerequisite to the Iraqis winning the counter-insurgency struggle they will face in the coming decade. We absolutely can do this. But this police program is now inadequately resourced.

4th - The creation of an Iraqi government of national unity is a central requirement. We must help create a legitimate government for which the Iraqi security forces will fight and die. If we do not see the successful development of a pluralistic administration in the first 120 days of the emerging Jawad al-Maliki leadership - there will be significant chance of the country breaking apart in warring factions among the Sunnis and Shia - with a separatist Kurdish north embroiled in their own potential struggle with the Turks.

The incompetence and corruption of the interim Iraqi Administration has been significant. There is total lack of trust among the families, the tribes, and the sectarian factions created by the 35 years of despotism and isolation of the criminal Saddam regime. This is a traumatized society with a malignant political culture. There is a huge "brain drain" taking place with educated and wealthy Iraqis getting out with their money. This is a loss of the potential leadership to solve the mess that is Iraq today. The pot is also being stirred from the outside Iraq by six neighboring states - none of which have provided significant economic or political assistance.

However, in my view, the Iraqis are likely to successfully create a governing entity. The intelligence picture strongly portrays a population that wants a federal Iraq, wants a national Army, rejects the AIF as a political future for the nation, and is optimistic that their life can be better in the coming years. Unlike the Balkans—the Iraqis want this to work. The bombing of the Samarra Mosque brought the country to the edge of all-out war. However, the Iraqi Army did not crack, the moderates held, Sistani called for restraint, the Sunnis got a chill of fear seeing what could happen to them as a minority population, and the Coalition Forces suddenly were seen correctly as a vital force that could keep the population safe in the absence of Iraqi power. In addition, the Shia were reminded that Iran is a Persian power with goals that conflict with the Shia Arabs of southern and central Iraq.

It is likely that the Iraqis will pull together enough political muscle to get through the coming 30 day crisis to produce a cabinet to submit to the Parliament - as well as the four month deadline to consider constitutional amendments. The resulting government is likely to be weak and barely functional. It may stagger along and fail in 18 months. But it is very likely to prevent the self-destruction of Iraq. Our brilliant and effective U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad will be the essential ingredient to keeping Iraq together. If the U.S. loses his leadership in the coming year, this thing could implode.

5th - The foreign jihadist fighters have been defeated as a strategic and operational threat to the creation of an Iraqi government. Aggressive small unit combat action by Coalition Forces combined with good intelligence - backed up by new Iraqi Security Forces is making an impact. The foreign fighters remain a serious tactical menace. However, they are a minor threat to the heavily armed and wary U.S. forces. They cannot successfully stop the Iraqi police and army recruitment. Their brutal attacks on the civil population are creating support for the emerging government. The foreign fighters have failed to spark open civil war from the Shia. The Samarra bombing may well have inoculated the

country to the possible horror of total war. The Iraqis are rejecting the vision of a religious state. The al Qaeda in-Iraq organization is now largely Sunni Iraqi - not foreign fighters. U.S. Marine and Army combat effectiveness - combined with very effective information operations--- has taken the fun out of Jihad.

6th - The U.S. Inter-Agency Support for our strategy in Iraq is grossly inadequate. A handful of brilliant, courageous, and dedicated Foreign Service Officers have held together a large, constantly changing, marginally qualified, inadequately experienced U.S. mission. The U.S. influence on the Iraqi national and regional government has been extremely weak. U.S. consultants of the IRMO do not live and work with their Iraqi counterparts, are frequently absent on leave or home consultations, are often in-country for short tours of 90 days to six months, and are frequently gapped with no transfer of institutional knowledge.

In Iraq, nothing is possible without carefully managed relationships between the U.S. officials and their Iraqi interlocutors. Trust between people is the prerequisite and basis of progress for this deeply Arab culture. The other U.S. agencies of government such as Justice, DHS, Commerce, Agriculture, and Transportation are in Iraq in small numbers for too short time periods. The U.S. Departments actually fight over who will pay the \$11.00 per day per diem on food. This bureaucratic nonsense is taking place in the context of a war costing the American people \$7 billion a month - and a battalion of soldiers and Marines killed or wounded a month.

The State Department actually cannot direct assignment of their officers to serve in Iraq. State frequently cannot staff essential assignments such as the new PRTs which have the potential to produce such huge impact in Iraq. The bottom line is that only the CIA and the U.S. Armed Forces are at war. This situation cries out for remedy.

7th - We face a serious strategic dilemma. Are U.S. combat troops operating in a police action governed by the rule of Iraqi law? Or are they a Coalition Military Force supporting a counter-insurgency campaign in a nation with almost no functioning institutions? The situation must remain ambiguous until the Iraqi government is actually operating effectively. We currently have excellent rules of engagement (ROE) governing the use of lethal force. These rules are now morphing under the pressures of political sensitivity at tactical level.

Many U.S. soldiers feel constrained not to use lethal force as the option of first instance against clearly identified and armed AIF terrorists - but instead follow essentially police procedures. Without question, we must clearly and dramatically rein in the use of lethal force - and zero out the collateral killing or wounding of innocent civilians trying to survive in this war zone. However, the tactical rules of engagement will need constant monitoring to maintain an appropriate balance.

8th - Thanks to strong CENTCOM leadership and supervision at every level, our detainee policy has dramatically corrected the problems of the first year of the War on Terrorism. Detainee practices and policy in detention centers in both Iraq and Afghanistan that I have visited are firm, professional, humane, and well supervised. However, we may be in danger of over-correcting. The AIF are exploiting our overly restrictive procedures and are routinely defying the U.S. interrogators. It is widely believed that the US has a "14 day catch and release policy" and the AIF "suspect" will soon be back in action.

This is an overstatement of reality, however, we do have a problem. Many of the AIF detainees routinely accuse U.S. soldiers of abuse under the silliest factual situations knowing it will trigger an automatic investigation. In my view, we will need to move very rapidly to a policy of the Iraqis taking legal charge of the detainees in our Brigade Detention Centers--- with us serving a support not lead role. We may need to hire U.S. contractor law enforcement teams at U.S. tactical battalion level to support the function of "evidentiary packages" as well as accompanying prisoners to testify in court in Baghdad.

9th - The stateside Army and Marine Corps needs significant manpower augmentation to continue the Iraq counter-insurgency and Iraqi training mission. In my judgment, CENTCOM must constrain the force level in Iraq or we risk damaging our ground combat capability which we will need in the ongoing deterrence of threat from North Korea, Iran, Syria, China against Taiwan, Venezuela, Cuba, and other potential flashpoints.

The stateside Army and Marine Corps also must rapidly create an enhanced Arabic language capability in the Armed Forces. We need to take 20% of each Leavenworth class and 10% of each advanced course class and put them through a 90 day total immersion Defense Language Institute Arabic course using only native speakers.

10th - CENTCOM and the U.S. Mission are running out of the most significant leverage we have in Iraq - economic reconstruction dollars. Having spent \$18 billion - we now have \$1.6 billion of new funding left in the pipeline. Iraq cannot sustain the requisite economic recovery without serious U.S. support. The Allies are not going to help. They will not fulfill their pledges. Most of their pledges are loans not grants.

It would be misguided policy to fail to achieve our political objective after a \$400 billion war because we refused to sustain the requirement to build a viable economic state. Unemployment is a bigger enemy than the AIF. It is my view that we will fail to achieve our political-military objectives in the coming 24 months if we do not continue economic support on the order of \$5-10 billion per year. This is far, far less than the cost of fighting these people.

11th – We need to better equip the Iraqi Army with a capability to deter foreign attack - and to have a leveraged advantage over the Shia militias and the AIF insurgents they must continue to confront. The resources we are now planning to provide are inadequate by an order of magnitude or more. The cost of a coherent development of the Iraqi security forces is the ticket out of Iraq - and the avoidance of the constant drain of huge U.S. resources on a monthly basis.

12th - There is a rapidly growing animosity in our deployed military forces toward the U.S. media. We need to bridge this gap. Armies do not fight wars - countries fight wars. We need to continue talking to the American people through the press. They will be objective in reporting facts if we facilitate their information gathering mission. The country is way too dangerous for the media to operate in any other manner than temporarily imbedded with U.S. or Iraqi security forces. The enormous good will already generated by the superb performance of U.S. combat forces will ebb away if we do not continue to actively engage media at every level. We also cannot discount 2000 IED's a month, hundreds of US casualties a month, or the chaos of the central battlefield of the insurgency - which is Baghdad.

13th –U.S. public diplomacy and rhetoric about confronting Iranian nuclear weapons is scaring neighbors in the Gulf. They will not support another war.. They have no integrated missile and interceptor air defense. They have no credible maritime coastal defense system to protect their ports and oil production facilities. Our Mid-East allies believe correctly that they are ill-equipped to deal with Iranian strikes to close the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. They do not think they can handle politically or militarily a terrorist threat nested in their domestic Shia populations.

A U.S. military confrontation with Iran could result in Sadr attacking our forces in Baghdad - or along our 400 mile line of communications out of Iraq to the sea. The Iranian people have collectively decided to go nuclear. The Chinese and the Russians will not in the end support serious collective action against Iran. The Iranians will achieve their nuclear weapon purpose within 5-10 years.

Now is the time for us to create the asymmetrical alliances and defensive capabilities to hedge the Iranian nuclear threat without pre-emptive warfare. We can bankrupt and isolate the Iranians as we did the Soviet Union and create a stronger Gulf Alliance that will effectively deter this menace to our security.

5. SUMMARY:

The U.S. will remain in a serious crisis in Iraq during the coming 24 months. There is decreasing U.S. domestic support for the war; although in my view the American people understand that we must not fail or we risk a ten year disaster of foreign policy in the vital Gulf Oil Region. U.S. public opinion may become increasingly alienated by Iraqi ingratitude for our sacrifice on their behalf (huge percentages of both the Shia and Sunni populations believe that the MNF Coalition forces are the single greatest threat to safety and security in Iraq today) ---and by astonishingly corrupt and incompetent Iraqi management of their own recovery. (Much of the national oil and electricity problem is caused by poor maintenance or deliberate internal sabotage of the infrastructure for reasons of criminal corruption ---or to prevent energy from flowing away from the production facilities to Baghdad.)

The situation is perilous, uncertain, and extreme - but far from hopeless. The U.S. Armed Forces are a rock. This is the most competent and brilliantly led military in a tactical and operational sense that we have ever fielded. Its courage and dedication is unabated after 20,000 killed and wounded. The U.S. leadership on the ground is superb at strategic level - Ambassador Khalilzad, General Abizaid, and General Casey. The Iraqi security forces are now surging into a lead role in internal counter-insurgency operations.

The Iraqi political system is fragile but beginning to play a serious role in the debate over the big challenges facing the Iraqi state - oil, religion, territory, power, separatism, and revenge. The neighboring states have refrained from tipping Iraq into open civil war. The UN is cautiously thinking about re-entry and doing their job of helping consolidate peace. The Iraqis are going to hold Saddam and his senior leadership accountable for their murderous behavior over 35 years. The brave Brits continue to support us both politically and militarily. NATO is a possible modest support to our efforts.

There is no reason why the U.S. cannot achieve our objectives in Iraq. Our aim must be to create a viable federal state under the rule of law which does not: enslave its own people, threaten its neighbors, or produce weapons of mass destruction. This is a ten year task. We should be able to draw down most of our combat forces in 3-5 years. We have few alternatives to the current US strategy which is painfully but gradually succeeding. This is now a race against time. Do we have the political will, do we have the military power, will we spend the resources required to achieve our aims?

It was very encouraging for me to see the progress achieved in the past year. Thanks to the leadership and personal sacrifice of the hundreds of thousands of men and women of the CENTCOM team and the CIA – the American people are far safer today than we were in the 18 months following the initial intervention.

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