



Adjunct Professor of International Affairs

March 26, 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR: **Colonel Michael Meese**
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CC: **Colonel Cindy Jebb**
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SUBJECT: After Action Report—General Barry R McCaffrey USA (Ret)
VISIT IRAQ AND KUWAIT 9-16 March 2007

1. PURPOSE: This memo provides feedback on my strategic and operational assessment of security operations in both Iraq and Kuwait in support of US Central Command. Look forward to providing lectures to the Faculty Seminar and National Security Seminar during upcoming visit on 4 April 2007.

2. SOURCES:

A. Iraq:

- 1.) Gen David Petraeus. MNF-I CG:** One-on-one Exit Briefing. Working dinner. One-on-one in-brief office call.
- 2.) Chargé (DCM) Ambassador Daniel Speckhard.**
- 3.) LTG Raymond Odierno:** Commander Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I).
- 4.) LTG Graeme Lamb. (UK) DCG of Multi-National Force – Iraq (MNF-I):** One-on-one Office Call.
- 5.) LTG Marty Dempsey. (MNSTC-I) CG:** Briefings. “Developing the Iraqi Army and Police.” Working lunch.
- 6.) Senior Special Operations General Officer. OCF-I CG:** Update on Direct Action – Counter Terrorism.
- 7.) MG Randy Mixon. Multi-National Division – North (MND-N) CG 25th Infantry Division:** Office Call. Working supper. TOC Briefing. (Tikrit).
- 8.) MG Thomas Moore, USMC. Multi-National Force – Iraq (MNF-I) Chief of Staff:** Office Call.
- 9.) MG Walter Gaskins, USMC. Multi-National Division West. (Marines. Fallujah) (MNF-W) Commander Ground Combat Element. Fallujah:** Working lunch. Intelligence assessment briefing. Long term assessment briefing.
- 10.) GO Briefings. MG Dave Fastaband, MG Kurt Cichowski (DCS SPA), MG Bill Caldwell, MG Skip Scott, (UK) BG Baverstock (DDCS SPA):** General officer seminar/tutorial. “The Situation in Iraq.”

- 11.) American Embassy Baghdad Country Team Briefing – AMB Speckhard, AMB Joe Saloom (Director of IRMO), AMB Tim Carney (Economic Coordinator), BG Mike Walsh (Gulf Region Division Corps of Engineers), Mr. Dan Weygandt (ECON Counselor), Dr. Terry Kelly (JSPA): Meeting/Briefings.
- 12.) MG Jack Gardner. Commander. US Detention Facility -- Iraqi Detainees: Staff briefings. Intelligence and detainee operations.
- 13.) MG Joe Fils. CG Multi-National Division-Baghdad (MND-B): Office call.
- 14.) BG Vince Brooks. (ADC-O) and Division Battle Staff. 1st Cav Div. (MND-B): Battle Staff Briefing.
- 15.) BG Steve Anderson. MNF-I (R&S): Dinner/Discussions. Coalition logistics.
- 16.) BG Dana Pittard. CG, Iraq Assistance Group. “Creating the Iraqi Security Forces.”
- 17.) COL Pete Forman, Chief-of-staff. Briefing---“Embedded Training Teams.”
- 18.) Visit – Joint US-Iraqi HQs. West Baghdad. Briefings. Baghdad Security.
 MAJ Gen. ---CG. 6th Iraqi Army Division
 MAJ Gen. ---CG. 2nd National Police Division
 MAJ Gen. ---CG. Iraqi KAC.
 COL Britt, MET Chief
 COL Griese, 1st Cav Div. (ISF G3 Chief)
- 19.) Commander -- CJSOTF-AP: Special Forces support of Iraqi operations. (Balad).
- 20.) 13th Sustainment Command (Balad). Logistics support for the coalition. Working breakfast:
 COL Crissy Gayagas. Dep CMD.
 COL David Cotter. Chief-of-Staff.
 COL Gregg Gross. Distribution.
 COL Glenn Grothe. G-3.
- 21.) COL Burton. Commander. 2nd Brigade Combat Team. 1st Inf. Div: Visit Command Post. Baghdad security operations.
- 22.) COL Mike Kershaw. Commander. 2nd Brigade Combat Team. 10th Mountain Division: Visit Command Post. Baghdad security operations.
- 23.) LTC -- Intelligence: Working breakfast – “The Enemy Situation.”
- 24.) Military Police Major. Working breakfast. - “Detainee Operations.”
- 25.) Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg. UN Representative to Iraq (Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, SRSG: Two hour office call. “The political situation in Iraq.”
- 26.) USAID Briefings. US Embassy-- Green Zone. Ms. Hilda Arellano and Mr. Mike Harvey: USAID Country Development Plan.
- 27.) Mr. Derek Harvey (CIOOC): Meeting.
- 28.) MAJ John Atkins. Mr. Brian McLaughlin. Mr. Anthony Garcia: Briefing on ISF Readiness.
- 29.) COL Murray. LTC Jeff McDougall (C3 Plans). COL John Orourke (Dep C3). MAJ O. Ken Straller (C3 Plans). COL Martin Wilson (Chief Plans and Policy). MAJ James Powell (Campaign Planner): MNC-I Plans.

30.) Asymmetric Warfare Group -- MAJ Blake Conners (TRP CDR). Matt Dennis (opso). Kevin Corbit (Field Team). Mike Campbell (TRP SRG). Dana Guy. James Kramas: Working Dinner.

B. Kuwait:

- 1.) Ambassador Richard Lebaron. Kuwait:** Working breakfast. (Plus DCM, DAO, Dep CDR OMC-K)
- 2.) LTG Steve Whitcomb, USA. Commander 3rd Army. Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.**
- 3.) MG Dennis Hardy. DCG. 3rd US Army:** Office Call/Briefing. “The support concept for US Forces Iraq and Afghanistan.”
- 4.) BG Sam Thompson, USA (Ret):** President MPRI Corp. Kuwait.
- 5.) BG Joe Martz:** Camp Beuhring. Udari Range. “Final training – pre-entry to Iraq.”
- 6.) BG Mark Solo, USAF. Chief, OMC-K:** “The situation in Kuwait.”
- 7.) Colonel David Cordon. Vice Chief, OMC-K:** Briefing. “The Kuwait Armed Forces.”
- 8.) LTC Robert Friedenborg. Chief. Defense Attaché Office:** Briefing – “The situation in Kuwait.”
- 9.) General Officer/Senior Leader Working Dinner. Briefing—“US Forces in Kuwait.” Camp Arifjan.**

3. THE PROBLEM:

These are the facts.

Iraq is ripped by a low grade civil war which has worsened to catastrophic levels with as many as 3000 citizens murdered per month. The population is in despair. Life in many of the urban areas is now desperate. A handful of foreign fighters (500+) --- and a couple of thousand Al Qaeda operatives incite open factional struggle through suicide bombings which target Shia holy places and innocent civilians. Thousands of attacks target US Military Forces (2900 IED’s) a month--- primarily stand off attacks with IED’s, rockets, mortars, snipers, and mines from both Shia (EFP attacks are a primary casualty producer) ---and Sunni (85% of all attacks---80% of US deaths—16% of Iraqi population.)

Three million Iraqis are internally displaced or have fled the country to Syria and Jordan. The technical and educated elites are going into self-imposed exile---a huge brain drain that imperils the ability to govern. The Maliki government has little credibility among the Shia populations from which it emerged. It is despised by the Sunni as a Persian surrogate. It is believed untrustworthy and incompetent by the Kurds.

There is no function of government that operates effectively across the nation--- not health care, not justice, not education, not transportation, not labor and commerce, not electricity, not oil production. There is no province in the country in which the government has dominance. The government cannot spend its own money effectively. (\$7.1 billion sits in New York banks.) No Iraqi government official, coalition soldier, diplomat, reporter, foreign NGO, nor contractor can walk the streets of Baghdad, nor Mosul, nor Kirkuk, nor Basra, nor Tikrit, nor Najaf, nor Ramadi---without heavily armed protection.

The police force is feared as a Shia militia in uniform which is responsible for thousands of extra-judicial killings. There is no effective nation-wide court system. There are in general almost no acceptable Iraqi penal institutions. The population is terrorized by rampant criminal gangs involved in kidnapping, extortion, robbery, rape, massive stealing of public property ---such as electrical lines, oil production material, government transportation, etc. (Saddam released 80,000 criminal prisoners.)

The Iraqi Army is too small, very badly equipped (inadequate light armor, junk Soviet small arms, no artillery, no helicopters to speak of, currently no actual or planned ground attack aircraft of significance, no significant air transport assets (only three C-130's), no national military logistics system, no national military medical system, etc. The Iraqi Army is also unduly dominated by the Shia, and in many battalions lacks discipline. There is no legal authority to punish Iraqi soldiers or police who desert their comrades. (The desertion/AWOL numbers frequently leave Iraqi Army battalions at 50% strength or less.)

In total, enemy insurgents or armed sectarian militias (SCIRI, JAM, Pesh Merga, AQI, 1920's Brigade, et. al.) probably exceed 100,000 armed fighters. These non-government armed bands are in some ways more capable of independent operations than the regularly constituted ISF. They do not depend fundamentally on foreign support for their operations. Most of their money, explosives, and leadership are generated inside Iraq. The majority of the Iraqi population (Sunni and Shia) support armed attacks on American forces. Although we have arrested 120,000 insurgents (hold 27,000) and killed some huge number of enemy combatants (perhaps 20,000+) --- the armed insurgents, militias, and Al Qaeda in Iraq without fail apparently re-generate both leadership cadres and foot soldiers. Their sophistication, numbers, and lethality go up--- not down--- as they incur these staggering battle losses.

US domestic support for the war in Iraq has evaporated and will not return. The great majority of the country thinks the war was a mistake. The US Congress now has a central focus on constraining the Administration use of military power in Iraq ---and potentially Iran. The losses of US Army, Marine, and Special Operations Force casualties in Iraq now exceed 27,000 killed and wounded. (Note: The Iraqi Security Forces have suffered more than 49,000 casualties in the last 14 months.) The war costs \$9 Billion per month. Stateside US Army and Marine Corps readiness ratings are starting to unravel. Ground combat equipment is shot in both the active and reserve components. Army active and reserve component recruiting has now encountered serious quality and number problems. In many cases we are forced to use US contractors to substitute for required military functions. (128,000 contractors in Iraq---includes more than 2000 armed security personnel.) Waivers in US Army recruiting standards for: moral turpitude, drug use, medical issues, criminal justice records, and non-high school graduation have gone up significantly. We now are enlisting 42 year old first term soldiers. Our promotion rates for officers and NCOs have skyrocketed to replace departing leaders. There is no longer a national or a theater US Army strategic reserve. (Fortunately, powerful US Naval, Air Force, and nuclear capabilities command huge deterrence credibility.)

We are at the "knee of the curve." Two million+ troops of the smallest active Army force since WWII have served in the war zone. Some active units have served three, four, or even five combat deployments. We are now routinely extending nearly all combat units in both Iraq and Afghanistan. These combat units are being returned to action in some cases with only 7-12 months of stateside time to re-train and re-equip. The current deployment requirement of 20+ brigades to Iraq and 2+ brigades in Afghanistan is not sustainable.

We will be forced to call up as many as nine National Guard combat brigades for an involuntary second combat tour this coming year. (Dr Chu at DOD has termed this as "no big deal.") Many believe that this second round of involuntary call-ups will topple the weakened National Guard structure--- which is so central to US domestic security. The National Guard Bureau has argued for a call up of only 12 months instead of 18 months. This misses the point---DOD will without fail be forced to also extend these National Guard brigades in combat at the last minute given the continuation of the current emergency situation.

Iraq's neighbors are a problem--- not part of the solution (with the exception of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait). They provide little positive political or economic support to the Maliki government.

Our allies are leaving to include the courageous and well equipped Brit's---by January 2008 we will be largely on our own.

In summary, the US Armed Forces are in a position of strategic peril. A disaster in Iraq will in all likelihood result in a widened regional struggle which will endanger America's strategic interests (oil) in the Mid-east for a generation. We will also produce another generation of soldiers who lack confidence in their American politicians, the media, and their own senior military leadership.

4. THE CURRENT SITUATION:

This is the situation.

Since the arrival of General David Petraeus in command of Multi-National Force Iraq--- the situation on the ground has clearly and measurably improved.

1st: The Maliki government has given the green light to prune out elements of the renegade Sadr organization in Baghdad. More than 600+ rogue leaders have been harvested by US and Iraqi special operations forces with the explicit or tacit consent of the government. Sadr himself has fled to Iran and many of his key leaders have escaped to the safety of the Shia south. His fighting cadres were ordered to go to ground, hide their weapons, take down their check points, stop the terrible ethnic cleansing and terror tactics against the Sunni population, and ignore (not cooperate) with US and ISF forces.

2nd: The US and Iraqi Forces have now dramatically changed their operational scheme. More than 50+ Iraqi Police/Army and US Army Joint Security Stations (JSS) are now being emplaced across the city and extended into the suburbs. The pre-operation planning and rehearsals were superb. The presence of these joint military elements is now becoming ubiquitous across the urban areas. Although many of these small outposts have been attacked—none has yet been seriously jeopardized. The Iraqi people are encouraged ---life is almost immediately springing back in many parts of the city. The murder rate has plummeted. IED attacks on US forces during their formerly vulnerable daily transits from huge US bases on the periphery of Baghdad are down--- since these forces are now permanently based in their operational area.

3rd: The Iraqis have finally committed credible numbers of integrated Police and Army units to the battle of Baghdad. The strength of IA, IP, and NP units has steadily gone up aided by clever monetary and troop leader incentives. The ISF formations are showing increased willingness to aggressively operate against insurgent/militia forces. Although there is continuing political interference by politicians of both the Iraqi Administration and legislators--- this is clearly a serious urban security operation.

4th: There is a real and growing ground swell of Sunni tribal opposition to the Al Qaeda-in-Iraq terror formations. (90% Iraqi.) This counter-Al Qaeda movement in Anbar Province was fostered by brilliant US Marine leadership. There is now unmistakable evidence that the western Sunni tribes are increasingly convinced that they blundered badly by sitting out the political process. They are also keenly aware of the fragility of the continued US military presence that stands between them and a vengeful and overwhelming Shia-Kurdish majority class--- which was brutally treated by Saddam and his cruel regime. There is now active combat between Sunni tribal leadership and AQI terrorists. Of even greater importance, the Sunni tribes are now supplying their young men as drafts for the Iraqi Police. (IP). AQI is responding with customary and sickening violence. Police are beheaded in groups; families of IP officers are murdered (or in one case a 12 year old boy was run over multiple times by a truck in front of his family)—all designed to intimidate the tribes. It is not working. The Takfiri AQI extremism of: no music, no photos, no videos, no cutting of beards, etc does not sit well with the moderate form of Islam practiced among the western tribes. This is a crucial struggle and it is going our way—for now.

5th: The equipment and resources for the Iraqi Security Forces has increased dramatically. The ISF has planned 2007 expenditures of more than \$7.3 billion. The Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior are the only two of 27 Iraqi Ministries that have executed their budgets at 90% plus satisfactory rates. (General Petraeus is now putting US military liaison officers in ten additional civilian Ministries to jump start their budget process.) PM Maliki has pushed to create a larger security force of more than 100,000 Iraqi Army troops. Thousands (3500) of armored Humvee's, Cougar and BTR-80 light wheeled armored vehicles (500+) , and other equipment (3500 RPG's, 1400 heavy machine guns, 900+ mortars, 80+ helicopters) are now flowing into the force. To my great surprise, the Iraqis are using FMS Sales to execute their capital expenditure program with great effect. This includes transition to all US small arms for M4 Carbine and M16A2 rifle. (They will continue to use Soviet type machine guns.) The ISF training system is beginning to work effectively with their own trainers. (However, there are still requirements for the more than 5000+ US military and contract police trainers). The Iraqi training base is cranking out 24,000 soldiers a year from 5 Regional and two national training bases. More than 12 Police Academies are producing 26,000 new police a year. The end goal will be an Iraqi security force of more than 370,000 Police and Army--- organized in 120 battalions.

6th: Reconciliation of the internal warring elements in Iraq will be how we eventually win the war in Iraq---if it happens. There is a very sophisticated and carefully integrated approach by the Iraqi government and Coalition actors to defuse the armed violence from internal enemies and bring people into the political process. There are encouraging signs that the peace and participation message does resonate with many of the more moderate Sunni and Shia warring factions. Of course, there is no intent to negotiate with either the extreme Bathist elements or the Al Qaeda in Iraq terrorists. The UK three star Deputy MNF-I Commander – (LTG Graeme Lamb) has done a superb job with this process.

7th: US Combat forces are simply superb. The Army and Marine brigade, battalion, and company commanders are the most experienced and talented leaders in our history. Re-enlistment rates are simply astonishing. The joint integration of combat power is extremely effective --- but is deemed unremarkable by the involved units. (I found a Marine battalion—with all three of its fighting companies attached from an Army battalion.) These Marine and Army combat units rapidly employ synchronized air and ground combat power, use enormous fire discipline, are compassionate with vulnerable civilians, and move with explosive energy and courage when they pin a target.

The command and control technology, training, contractor support, and flexibility of Marine and Army combat formations are magnificent. Digital data, integrated feed of all live sensors to include persistent “eyes on target” UAV’s, immediate recovery of data in formats that promote decision-making, and enormous technical competence of battle staff personnel are hallmarks of the system. The downside is that at division and brigade level these C3I command posts are not movable. I do not believe that division or brigade commanders have developed, equipped and rehearsed Assault CP teams. They simply are not prepared to effectively fight a war of maneuver. (For example, against the Syrians or Iranians.)

The wariness, adherence to ROE, and discipline of the involved air and ground forces are awe-inspiring. I watched with fascination the attack video of an Apache whose pilots held fire at absolutely the last second ---when what they suspected (correctly) was an innocent farmer appeared in the foreground of a pending Hellfire launch against 5-6 armed insurgents. The pilot painstakingly changed his attack angle--- and sailed the Hellfire over the farmer’s head and successfully nailed the insurgents.

The attention to detail of US Army and Marine units on Entry Control Points (ECP’s) makes me enormously proud as a former combat platoon leader and company commander. Week after week—in unbelievably adverse weather (near freezing to 125 degrees Fahrenheit—the ECP troops man these controlled access areas which require extreme vigilance if their buddies are to be protected. I watched several chilling tapes of the instant death suffered by these brave troops (US or Iraqi) when a suicide bomber actual detonates himself in the position.

8th: The US Tier One special operations capability is simply magic. They are deadly in getting their target—with normally zero collateral damage—and with minimal friendly losses or injuries. Some of these assault elements have done 200-300 takedown operations at platoon level. The comprehensive intelligence system is phenomenal. We need to re-think how we view these forces. They are a national strategic system akin to a B1 bomber. We need to understand that the required investment level in the creation of these forces demands substantial dedicated UAV systems, intelligence, and communications resources. These special operations formations cannot by themselves win the nation’s wars. However, with them we have a tool of enormous and decisive strategic significance which has crucial importance in the global war on terrorists.

9th: The US Armed Forces logistic system is successfully providing 100% of required supplies, services, maintenance, medical support, and material for battle. Never in the history of warfare has a military force been more generously and effectively supported than in Iraq. It is also a house of cards. We need a Joint Logistics command. We need to provide additional resource muscle to create a more robust LOC thru Jordan to Iraq. We are overly dependant on civilian contractors. In extreme danger---they will not fight.

We are overly dependant on Kuwait for logistics. If Iranian military action closed the Persian Gulf—the US combat force in Iraq would immediately begin to suffocate logistically. We cannot depend on a Turkish LOC in the coming five years.

We need 500 USAF C17’s and the tanker fleet required to support them. The Air Force flew 13,000 truck loads of material into Iraq for pinpoint distribution last year. The two USAF Squadrons of C17’s now in-theater make a gigantic contribution.

The support of Kuwait has been absolutely vital to our war on terror. The presence of 22,000 US Army Forces, 6000 US contractors, and 1800 Air Force personnel is crucial to the continuation of military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf. Kuwait is the lynchpin of the entire logistics effort. We send a thousand trucks a day up into Iraq from Kuwait. It is impressive how effectively we have lowered our signature and footprint in Kuwait. We have come down from twenty-three bases --to four. Camp Arifjan has been reduced in size by more than 1/3rd. We need strong continued diplomatic support and recognition of Kuwait's courageous support of the war effort.

5. THE WAY AHEAD:

In my judgment, we can still achieve our objective of: a stable Iraq, at peace with its neighbors, not producing weapons of mass destruction, and fully committed to a law-based government. The courage and strength of the US Armed Forces still gives us latitude and time to build the economic and political conditions that might defuse the ongoing civil war. Our central purpose is to allow the nation to re-establish governance based on some loose federal consensus among the three major ethnic-factional actors. (Shia, Sunni, Kurd.)

We have very little time left. This President will have the remainder of his months in office beleaguered by his political opponents to the war. The democratic control of Congress and its vocal opposition can actually provide a helpful framework within which our brilliant new Ambassador Ryan Crocker can maneuver the Maliki administration to understand their diminishing options. It is very unlikely that the US political opposition can constitutionally force the President into retreat. However, our next President will only have 12 months or less to get Iraq straight before he/she is forced to pull the plug. Therefore, our planning horizons should assume that there are less than 36 months remaining of substantial US troop presence in Iraq. The insurgency will continue in some form for a decade. This suggests the fundamental dilemma facing US policymakers.

The US Armed Forces cannot sustain the current deployment rate. We will leave the nation at risk to other threats from new hostile actors if we shatter the capabilities of our undersized and under-resourced Army, Marine, and special operations forces. The Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs must get Congress to provide emergency levels of resources, manpower, and energy into this rapidly failing system. If we do not aggressively rebuild ---the capability of the force actually deployed in Iraq will also degrade--- and we are likely to encounter a disaster.

The primary war winning strategy for the United States in the coming 12 months must be for Ambassador Ryan and General Petraeus to focus their considerable personal leadership skills on getting the top 100 Shia and Sunni leaders to walk back from the edge of all-out civil war. Reconciliation is the way out. There will be no imposed military solution with the current non-sustainable US force levels. Military power cannot alone defeat an insurgency—the political and economic struggle for power is the actual field of battle.

A sufficient but not necessary condition of success is adequate resources to build an Iraqi Army, National Police, local Police, and Border Patrol. We are still in the wrong ball park. The Iraqis need to capacity to jail 150,000 criminals and terrorists. They must have an air force with 150 US helicopters. (The US Armed Forces have 100+ medevac helicopters and 700 lift or attack aircraft in-country.) They need 5000 light armored vehicles for their ten divisions. They need enough precision, radar-assisted counter-battery artillery to suppress the constant mortar and rocket attacks on civilian and military targets. They should have 24 C130's---and perhaps three squadrons of light ground attack aircraft. I mention these numbers not to be precise—but to give an order of magnitude estimation that refutes our current anemic effort. The ISF have taken horrendous casualties. We must give them the leverage to replace us as our combat formations withdraw in the coming 36 months.

Finally, we must focus on the creation of a regional dialog led by the Iraqis with US active participation. The diplomatic process in the short run is unlikely to produce useful results. However, in the coming five years---it will be a prerequisite to a successful US military withdrawal ---that we open a neutral and permanent political forum (perhaps in Saudi Arabia) in which Iraq's neighbors are drawn into continuing cooperative engagement. A regional war would be a disaster for 25 years in the Mid-East. A continuing peace discussion forum may give us the diplomatic leverage to neutralize these malignant forces that surround and menace Iraq.

6. SUMMARY:

We have brilliant military and civilian leadership on the ground in Iraq. General Dave Petraeus, LTG Ray Odierno, and Ambassador Ryan Crocker have the country's treasure and combat power at their disposal. Our cause is just. The consequence of failure will be severe.

The American people hold that the US Armed Forces are the most trusted institution in our society. The polls also show that domestic opinion is not calling for precipitous withdrawal. However, this whole Iraq operation is on the edge of unraveling as the poor Iraqis batter each other to death with our forces caught in the middle.

We now need a last powerful effort to provide to US leaders on the ground ---the political support, economic reconstruction resources, and military strength it requires to succeed.

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