

in Anbar, the long-term plan—strategy of success—was to transition that fight to the Iraqi security forces. So when we got here, our mantra was to make as many police as we could possibly make, train properly, as well as increase the size, the capability, of the Iraqi army. And 2006 was supposed to be the year of the police, and in the grander strategy, the Coalition force was the windbreak, if you will, to allow the Iraqi army to come behind us, and then behind them, as we built the police force, to turn over to the police force, the city security to the police. All those things would contribute to Provincial Iraqi Control, or PIC, and that was a measure of security that would allow the governor [and] the division commanders out here the ability to address security emergencies and essentially provide for their own security without the help of the Coalition. That's what we're trying to do: put Iraqi army in the lead and really enable the Iraqis to do it themselves. So that's what we set out to do, coming here.

When we came here, there were slightly under 2,000 police in all of Anbar Province. After a year, we've got about 8,500 trained Iraqi police. Our ceiling that we're working under is 11,300 police, so we are still below where we need to be. The original timeline was to be there by December. We hit some months in March, April, May, where we were not able to generate any young men from Anbar to join the police or the army. Of late, meaning since October, that trend has just gone straight up. We are now able to recruit almost all the police we need to recruit, and right now I would say by about March [2007], possibly as late as April, we should be able to achieve that figure of 11,300 police, and that's for all of Anbar. That's Fallujah, Ramadi, Husaybah, Haditha, Haqlaniyah, Barwanah, all those cities will have a police force of their own. . . .

The inroads that we've established in terms of trying to create a province that has confidence in their ability to generate an economy, I think we've made tremendous progress there, mainly through the efforts of General [David G.] Reist and his efforts to attract investment from outside of Iraq and Anbar. He's maintained a very aggressive relationship—I mean that in a positive sense—with the expat community that lives in Jordan. Most of the

intelligentsia, the affluent Sunnis from Anbar left. They went to either Jordan or Syria, or other places. And his experience in the last year was [focused on] trying to attract them to come back in. We've looked at international support to attract investment. He has bridged to the secretary of defense's office to bring in economic transformation specialists in the form of Mr. [Paul A.] Brinkley to come in here and examine some of the state-owned enterprises—a glass factory, the cement factories—and what could we do to help transform those businesses, state-driven businesses, and have them now take on a more profit-generated, profit-incentive development. And, again, these are new concepts. . . .

The work we've done to establish the central services—electricity, water, sewage, trash, employment—I think we've established a foundation for those things to work. Trying to get, the Iraqis out here in Anbar, who have been suppressed for the last 30, 40 years by a state-driven economy, to now ask those people to look at a capitalist view economically is a major change. It's a sea change for the people. So through a series of meetings, conferences, conventions, we've been able to bring a lot of people who have some ability to influence what's happening here in Anbar. And you look at the natural resources, this place abounds in natural resources. The one natural resource that Anbar lacks is petroleum—oil—but there is wild speculation that out west there are huge natural gas fields that are out there, awaiting to be developed.

Anbar is largely an agrarian province. Estimates are that the agricultural production is only at about 30 percent of what it could be. The Euphrates River Valley is a hugely fertile area. It could easily feed this country, if not most of the Middle East, but trying to take a 19th century view of farming and accelerate that into an industrial farming mindset is a big change. So there are a lot of resources out here, not the least of which is the people themselves. I think they have always been tied to Baghdad with petrodollars, and it's the fear of the unknown, breaking away from Baghdad, because of that support network that the petrodollars always provided. Oil is still the biggest producer of cash in Iraq, and it probably always will be, but trying to get the Anbar people to have confidence in the other things that are here has been, that will take

more than a year to do that. So those are the things I'm very optimistic about.

Watching the governor [Mamoun Sami Rashid al-Alwani] grow, the governor was—again, he's still a one-man band—but watching him develop, sending him off to workshops to teach him how healthy bureaucracies work in a provincial government, training him, taking his staff with him, that has been very rewarding. We've watched the governor grow from being very uncomfortable with his position as the governor to the point now where he can go into meetings. He acts like a governor. He acts very authoritative, in a positive way. I've watched now mayors come up and acknowledge his presence as a governor. A year ago, no one saw him as the governor of Anbar Province. So he's grown into his position.

He's become more influential, and he's taken a very active role in the development of the economy of Anbar Province. He's all over the businesses, whether that's trying to get microfinancing up and working, whether that's, again, returning essential services, banking. It's a lot of work that remains to be done, so the governor has seen, I think, a very, very positive improvement in his capabilities. . . .

**Wheeler:** What have you seen as the key hurdles with Iraqi army recruitment nationally? That is a national issue.

**Zilmer:** Nationally, it's not a problem. The problem is out here in Anbar Province, where 90 percent of your province is Sunni. There is absolutely no problem with Shi'a. Shi'a soldiers, or *jundi* recruits, are very interested in joining, so the problem out in Anbar is that we can continually infuse or have *jundi* soldiers come out here, but we'd like a better mix with Sunnis. And trying to entice the Sunni young men to come out and join the army, that has proven problematic for us.

Many of the kids out west cannot pass a literacy examination, which is a requirement to join the police and the army. We think that a literacy program and waiver needs to be established to allow these kids to join the army, and during boot camp, or recruit training, or after some period of time, that there is a national program that teaches these young men how to read. In our view, that would be hugely successful in helping them come along.

But again, total numbers across the country I think are pretty good, but we're after Sunnis out here to join, and we've had checkered success on that. Now, what's changed all of that in the last three months, at least with respect to Ramadi, is the emergence of the tribal sheikhs. They have taken a much, much larger role in the security for their communities. They have come together in Ramadi to resist al-Qaeda, and in so doing, they've been able to chase out the young men to join the army, join the police most notably. We've seen great interest in joining the police, and, of late, in the last month and a half, we've had this organization sanctioned by the Ministry of Interior, called the Emergency Response Units, three battalion-sized units, about 750 Iraqis, or soldiers, or policemen, per battalion. So we've been able now to get our numbers swelling in terms of Iraqi police. I'd say in the year that we've been here, that's probably the biggest positive change we've seen.

So the key there was trying to get the sheikhs and the tribes that they lead to take a larger role in their own security, and I think that's come together for a combination of reasons. One, I think they've watched the success of the Coalition forces and the Iraqi army forces out there in their communities. We've been persistent there. In most of these communities that we're operating in, we remain a stable entity. In other words, we continue to be there. I think that's the trust that they were looking for, but that's been important. But what has also been important is the brutal murder, [the] intimidation that al-Qaeda practices on a daily basis has absolutely—before this—had smothered the tribes and some of the other groups. So I think they finally hit a point where they said, "Look, we're not going to survive this way, we're not going to progress this way."

So you have a couple of those things all come together at the same time, and then you get a couple of key personalities, like Sheikh [Abdul] Sattar [Abu Risha], and that's what we're looking for, this middle-class leadership to emerge and bring the people together. We've finally found some of that in Ramadi, and we're hoping that phenomenon [the Sahwa or Awakening] will spread throughout Anbar. But there are some parts of Anbar where it won't work. The tribes are strong in Ramadi. They're strong out west. They're less,

though, as you get closer to Baghdad, so again, that same phenomenon may not take place in other places that are in our area of operations. . . .

***Wheeler:*** How does the Coalition plug in to the [Provisional Joint Coordination Center (PJCC)]? We're enablers, we're mentors?

***Zilmer:*** Absolutely. We are advisers to the PJCC. Again, eventually we want to be able to extract ourselves from that, but, in the meantime, through our MTTs, our military transition teams, through our PTTs, our police transition teams, through our governance support teams who work out of the governor's office in Ramadi, through our advisor role, if you will, and our ability—frankly, we still have a lot of capability. We have a lot of enablers that the Iraqi people still need, whether that's the army or the police, so our involvement helps to facilitate the process, but also, if there are capabilities or enablers that only we have at the present time, then we can reach back and do that. But I think there's a great, at least in our experience out here, there has been I think a very, very strong relationship has developed between us, the police and the army, and the governor. We travel frequently with the governor. We spend a lot of time with the governor, now at the government center. We're joined as advisor teams with the army and the police, so I think for the most part they are very, very comfortable with us. They do trust us. They believe in what we're trying to do, so there is not an issue of us not being there. . . .

***Wheeler:*** Has the Marine Corps had to shift their way of doing business to a more patient approach in al-Anbar?

***Zilmer:*** Well, patience is certainly a virtue out here. I think we do recognize it, as a service, as a Marine Corps. We recognize that dealing in a counterinsurgency in the Middle East, or in the Arab world, requires a fundamental understanding of the culture, which gets back to some of the things we're now doing as a Corps in terms of identifying our officers, core areas where they will become experts, they're expected to become experts over the course of their career, whether that's in the Western Hemisphere, or the Middle East, or the Pacific region, or Europe. We've gone to great lengths to develop our cultural center that works out of Quantico [Center

for Advanced Operational Culture Learning]. Mojave Viper . . . all the Marines would go through a four-hour session of cultural training with Dr. Barak [A.] Salmoni, and he would go through the cultural nuances of how Arab people live, how they act, and understanding that cultural difference. And so we've applied a lot of that. We spend a lot of effort to get our Marines sensitive to that. It's hard to do in a four-hour class, to make you an expert on Middle Eastern culture. You just won't be there. But I think if we at least make our Marines and sailors coming over here, walking into a new culture, a new society, and these are the sort of norms, these are the sort of things you're going to have to do, and making sure that they have realistic expectations of what they will see happen, I think is important.

When I brief all the new MTTs, military transition teams, I talk to them specifically about that: is this an unrealistic expectation? They are not Western, and they have a certain style and methodology that is unique to their culture, and we ignore that at our own peril, and we set ourselves up for frustration. We want to see things happen—[snaps his fingers] boom, boom, boom—just the way Americans are, and it doesn't work over here. But if you look back at where you were two months ago, and two months before that, that's when you see the progress. If you want to see what changed today from yesterday, you're going to go nuts. But if you allow yourself to work through and then say, "Ah, two months ago, remember, we couldn't even do this before. We didn't even have this two months ago." That's where you see the success, and almost without exception, every Marine that I do talk to that finishes an advisor tour will tell you that this has been the most challenging, and yet the most rewarding, assignment he's ever had.

Like I said, it's not the guy who finishes number one at The Basic School. It's not the guy that finishes number one at EWS [Expeditionary Warfare School] or Command and Staff. It's not the guy that is six feet, two inches, 300 PFT [physical fitness test] guy. The people that come out here, their greatest gift is communications, and if they can't do that, if they can't immerse themselves with the Iraqi people, they can't communicate, they will not be effective. Almost any Marine can come in here, with the skills he brings with

him, if he has the ability to communicate, he will be an effective advisor. I mean, he certainly has to have a certain basic combat skills, particularly weapons employment, that sort of thing, but he doesn't necessarily have to be a combat arms guy to be successful in this role.

And the more senior they become, the more apparent that is, and I would use the example of our division MTT leader, Colonel [Juan G.] Ayala, who is a logistician. The requirement calls for a ground combat guy to be in that job. For a variety of reasons, we picked Colonel Ayala, and he has been wildly successful as an advisor, and he has just fit in so well here that they absolutely trust him to always shoot straight with them, and they will follow his lead. They will ask for his advice, and he will force them to work. So that's been a beautiful example, I think, of how the guy with the right skill sets can be a successful advisor.

**Wheeler:** You talk about this acknowledgment of Iraqi culture, Iraqi ways of doing things. Do we also acknowledge and bring in the nonelected, traditional leadership in places like Ramadi? What lessons have we learned?

**Zilmer:** Well, I think the biggest lesson we learned, you can be told a lot of things, but until you stick your finger in the fire, you don't understand what hot means, and then you understand not to do it again. And I think probably the biggest thing that we learned out here was the importance of the tribal engagement. Tribal engagement, in my view, at least for the near future, without tribal engagement, without tribal involvement, to include in the government, we're going to have a tough road. They are absolutely essential to the social fabric of the people in Iraq, and specifically in Anbar Province. And they must be part of everything. They must be part of everything that we do. That's probably been the single biggest lesson I think we've learned here. I think understanding what democracy is, again, it's easy for Americans because that's all we've ever known, the only thing we've ever lived under. And every American, every kid who's graduated from high school, has a working knowledge of government and democracy.

That just did not exist here. So you're asking here for the Iraqi people to place their faith, and trust, and confidence in something

that they don't really understand, because they've never had the opportunity. It's not because they're not smart enough. They are clearly smart enough. They may not be book smart, but they are very, very intelligent people. And it takes time for them, when you're trying to ask them to place trust and confidence in a government, a network, or a system of elected officials who may not necessarily have a tribal rank, that is foreign to them.

I think the votes were good, the elections were good, the people came out, there was a certain novelty to that. But I think then we start sitting down, okay, well, what does that mean, particularly the elected officials? Okay, all right, you are an elected official, these are the sorts of things that elected officials do. And when you resort to votes over and over and over again, whether it's a vote in a committee or a vote in a council, those are the pieces of democracy that I think are new for the process and that will simply take time to do. To make those city councils, provincial councils, to make them successful, there's going to have to be a strong buy-in from the tribal sheikhs. That is the custom, that is the most important social feature, I think, of the Anbar people, is that tribal sheikh relationship, and I think we had to learn that. And we've seen now, with the development of the Iraqi response units, the Sahwa Anbar, or the Awakening, that is purely being driven by the tribes and the sheikhs.

**Wheeler:** Sir, is there in any way a tension between supporting the sheikhs? Is there a danger of that undermining the elected governments?

**Zilmer:** Absolutely. We saw some examples of that where some of the sheikhs would go straight to Baghdad, and they would have an audience with the prime minister, or any of the ministers. They would curry favor with the ministers, who would bestow authorities unto them, would empower them to do things that completely circumnavigated the provincial governor. And so in some cases where it got them an immediate gratification, it was something that was maybe good, but long term it just undermines that ability of the governor to be the spokesman, if you will, for the province. It's like a chain of command. When you now allow these people to go straight to the top, you marginalize the capacity of the governor.

So yes, that potentially can be destructive to that provincial government you're trying to establish here. . . .

Our problem set is being driven by al-Qaeda. That's the common enemy to everybody out here. With a common enemy like al-Qaeda and some of these Sunni extremist insurgent groups out here, there's been a lot of common ground that we've been able to have between us, whether that's the Iraqi army, the Iraqi police, and Coalition. Our enemy is a common enemy that we all are sworn to defeat, so I think that's enabled us to do that.

So I think we've been able to have entrees into these teams. Every one of our transition teams is embedded with their battalion, brigade, division. They are embedded. They live there with those units. Many of these units still have partnerships with our battalions, meaning their companies live with our companies inside the combat outposts. We have that relationship, which doesn't always exist further east of Baghdad. Because of that, we've been able to build this trust and confidence, and I can go places with my division commanders. They can come up here and meet with me. I can go down there and visit with them. We can travel together throughout our areas of responsibility. They are TaCon [tactical control] to us, so they freely acknowledge that relationship.

The last thing that makes it easy to work with them, going back to this historic gulf that exists between Baghdad and Anbar—Anbar Province has never, ever been close to Baghdad. The real cynics out here would tell you that Baghdad has no interest whatsoever in seeing Anbar Province succeed, for any number of reasons. So we have in many cases become the champion of the Iraqi army and Iraqi police. We advocate for them, we fight many of the fights for them in Baghdad, whether that's Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior. We become the advocates for them, and in many cases, when the Ministry of Interior or Defense fail to provide sustainment, we provide that sustainment at a price. So we are always there, and so that's why I think we have a relationship out here that is different than other parts of the country, and for the most part, it's a very, very solid relationship.



Interview 10

*Enabling the Awakening, Part I*

MajGen Muzdis

## **Brigadier General David G. Reist**

*Deputy Commanding General (Support)  
I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)  
Multi National Force • West*

February 2006 to February 2007

Brigadier General David G. Reist is a logistics officer who commanded 1st Transportation Support Battalion (redesignated Transportation Support Group during Operation Iraqi Freedom) from 2002 to 2004 and Combat Service Support Group 11 during Operation Iraqi Freedom II. He was the commanding general of 1st Force Service Support Group (redesignated 1st Marine Logistics Group) from 2005 to 2007 and served as deputy commanding general (Support) for I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) from February 2006 to February 2007.

In this interview, Brigadier General Reist discusses the relationship between security and growth in the economy and self-governance in al-Anbar Province. He describes the economic potential of al-Anbar and the role I Marine Expeditionary Force has played in helping Anbaris to tap into that potential. He notes the relationship between key leaders who remained in al-Anbar amid the violence and those who were outside Iraq in places such as Jordan. He concludes with a description of the overall progress in al-Anbar and its potential to reach a “tipping point” toward rapid improvement.

Brigadier General Reist was interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler on 3 January 2007 at Camp Fallujah, Iraq.

***Lieutenant Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler:*** Sir, when you stepped on deck, what did you see as the priorities, and what were your key goals during your tour?

***Brigadier General David G. Reist:*** First of all, the focus obviously was economic and governance. And of the five LOOs [lines of operation] that exist, we kind of viewed it that the economics and governance would be the decisive effort, but not the point of main

effort on a daily basis. So it's kind of that silent hand that needs to happen that will turn events and will offer the things that will prove to be the tipping point. But on a day-to-day basis, realize that the security situation is going to drive everything around here. And that has proven very true.

One of the things when I say that, though, is a lot of people always ask, how can you sit there and have economic growth when you've got a security situation, [with] violence that doesn't, or would not be perceived that it would allow that? A recent article said that the GDP [gross domestic product] grew somewhere between 4 and 17 percent here in Iraq in 2006. A lot of folks went, "But how can that be happening? That's a country at war." Discounting that probably most of that growth comes from the Kurdish section, there are some things happening here. The unfortunate thing is it's not like measuring the GDP back in the United States. Their housing starts aren't monitored, the things we see on the news, but there are some things happening. It's touchy-feely, though. It's when you're out riding around and you see more people on the street. You see shops open. You see students on the street that you haven't seen in a long while, going to school and carrying their books. Those are indicators. Can you put it in a win-loss column and come up with an arithmetic formula? No. And that's the frustration sometimes, and quite honestly, I don't know if we want to do that. I don't know if we want to turn it into a total metric so that you'd put it into some algorithm and you'd come out with, "oh my God, here's exactly where you're at." The economics is slow, too. I mean, it's literally like watching paint dry.

Now on the government side, looking at things when we got here, once again, watching paint dry, but even slower-drying paint, because there is some frustration as we sit here on the ways the Sunnis view Baghdad, the way they see the national government as nonsupportive, the way they look at the government in that nonsupportive role, on the perception that it is a Shi'a-led, Iranian-backed government. Now whether that's true or not, it doesn't matter, because that's what they perceive. That's manifested in that they don't get their budget, that they don't get reconstruction funds, they think they see other people getting some things. It just adds to the fray.

How do we overcome that? The governor and I, we go to Baghdad probably once a week [to] lobby with some of the ministries. Our provincial council happens to be in Baghdad. And that's not a perfect situation. It should meet in Ramadi. When we first got here, it was meeting in Ramadi, but the security situation—going back to that—did not allow that. So what we've got, and I know this is a long, twisted thing, but you've got the five fingers of the LOOs here, the lines of operation, and you'd like to be able to slip them into a nice form-fitting glove, and each finger being equally important. Boy, I gotta tell you, this is something that you take maybe two steps forward every day, and some days you only take one step back, and some days you take three steps back. Then you wake up the next day, and you look where you can make some progress and bolster success, watch to keep failure from happening too much in one area. The most challenging thing I've done in 28 years, the most exhilarating thing I've done in 28 years. . . .

***Wheeler:*** How do you balance, on a daily basis, the subtleties of something like tribal engagement versus enhancing the elected government, which are, to some extent, at odds with each other?

***Reist:*** Good question. First of all, I'm not going to pretend that there's a cookbook for this. There might be people who have done this their whole life who understand it and know the complexities. For a lot of us that get put in a billet like this—I don't say this flippantly—but we make it up every day. Yeah, we have a plan, we have a goal. But that goal is framed from engagement and listening to different people at all levels.

We're engaged at Amman, Jordan. Why? Because there's a number of expats, there's a lot of very, very wealthy men that are there who are of Sunni origin, and Amman is a trading hub for this part of the world. So we go there, and we listen to some things that are happening there. We bounce it against some things that we hear from the RCTs [regimental combat teams], bottom up and top down, and we bring those things together. We had an economic conference, bottom up, from the city of Fallujah in Amman in May [2006]. We did a thing with the sheikhs, top down, in Amman later. . . .

Occasionally those folks cross a border, a border that exists for us on a map, a border that really doesn't exist for them. But these men are in touch, and they feed off each other. They are shaping things. They are probably determining who's going to be the winner in this. They're looking for economic gain. . . . Very wealthy men are looking at the situation for how they can exploit the economic gains that are going to come down the road. . . . What we've tried to do, I'm not sure how well, but you put the pieces in the same room and let the puzzle kind of come together, don't try to force the puzzle together, because forcing it will have a U.S. flavor on that force and probably not be as productive as the way the Iraqis will do it. . . .

**Wheeler:** If you could, connect back—and this is an additional complexity, or perhaps a benefit—when you're dealing with these businessmen, they can also influence the security situation because of their influence on the people. How does that all fit into the equation in terms of IP [Iraqi police] recruitment and things like that?

**Reist:** When we first started involvement, yes, we did tell them that we would love to have seen them—"gentlemen, can you influence this?" That's a dynamic that's been explained to me as follows: there's guys on the inside and there's guys on the outside, and guys on the inside are the guys that stay. The guys on the outside are the rich guys that either always had a business in Amman, or, because the security situation and maybe they were threatened, they left. Some folks have estimated that there are as many as 500,000 al-Anbaris that have gone to Amman, Jordan. So what you've got is, with this inside-outside dynamic, there's a little bit of friction there. If you're one of the guys who stayed, and you're fighting through it, and you're having a little bit of success, . . . you're the guy whose friends have died, and now there's that feeling that the rich guy, when everything settles down a little bit, is going to come back in and reestablish either an economic foothold, a traditional tribal relationship, this that, and the other, and we're dealing with that.

What we've done is we've tried to put these guys in the same room and let them work it out, because there are traditional tribal entities that exist out here that they will sort out. For example, if you were always the sheikh of sheikhs of the Dulaimi Federation, even

though you're in Amman, you're still recognized as the sheikh. There might be somebody inside al-Anbar that stayed that went, "You left them. I'm the sheikh now." They've got to work through that. I don't think we're in a position, both from enforcing, or cultural sensitivity, or knowledge-wise to know the nuances of who was doing what to whom within the tribe.

Now you get back to what you just asked, and where I kind of hinted at the start of the answer, can they influence things in Amman? Yes, I believe they can. I think they can influence it for two reasons. The first is the traditional, tribal nature of al-Anbar, and even though some of them have left, there is still that, "I am a member of the Dulaimi Federation," and 88 subtribes—about 15 prominent ones. It's there, though. That will not go away. Three years of fighting, four years of fighting, I don't think that will disappear.

The other thing, and the other aspect, is [that] there [are] very wealthy men in Amman. And money talks. Follow the money sometimes in life, and usually you get to where you're going. Those two things together are very important. . . .

The success in the police and the army appears to come, though, from the inside to date, not from the outside. That's provable at this point in time. But who knows what the subtle influence and that silent hand can do from the outside. It might be a call, a gesture, a meeting that we don't even know about that's happened. That's why we continue to engage, because those subtle nuances can make all the difference in the world. . . .

**Wheeler:** Sir, what have you seen in terms of refugees? There's been a lot of publicity about people fleeing al-Anbar, but what are we seeing recently in terms of people actually coming into al-Anbar from Baghdad and other places?

**Reist:** I don't have a count for you, but I've heard this, just talk on the streets and talk from people. It's kind of ironic that people are coming to al-Anbar for refuge when you would think that everybody, if you listen to the news, you would go, "Oh, I'm not going to al-Anbar, that's the worst place in the world." That's not the case. Fallujah is a city that is known, that is accepting refugees

from Baghdad right now because of the killings that are going on. Around here, it's done where families take in families and matters such as that. Are we seeing growth? Yes, we are. That's why economic growth is even more important, because we will have extra people in the province. What we need to do is we need to create as many jobs as possible so idle hands don't find other work.

The governor, just before Christmas, got his first allocation of reconstruction dollars from the federal government, and it equated to just under 40 million dollars. He'll get another 30 million dollars here, hopefully, in another couple weeks. And there are projects that are starting as he distributes that money to his mayors that will do a couple things. It will be a physical sign for the people that, "Wow, projects are starting, my community is getting a little bit better"—a success-breeds-success type thing. This is a slow ball to get moving, though. Once that happens, though, then possibly with some AQI [al-Qaeda in Iraq] getting pushed out, with the tribes taking control, the synergistic effect of several of these things happening all at once, that's what we're looking for.

And what are we waiting for? The tipping point. What will that tipping point be, as [Malcolm] Gladwell put it in his book? I don't know. Will we know it when we see it? Probably not. Will we be able to look back and hopefully say, "That was it"? I hope so. And that just like Gladwell describes in his book, *The Tipping Point*, it's there. Do some of us feel that we're in that area in some areas? Yeah, we do, because al-Qaim is a relatively good area right now. A combination of increased police across time, tribal entity, Coalition forces all working together after AQI was pushed out last year under II MEF's offensive campaign out there. So good things [are] happening where good things can, once again, based on the security situation. But that doesn't mean that good things can't happen where the security situation isn't pristine, either. I mean, there's economic growth in some bad areas all over the world. It just happens. . . .

***Wheeler:*** On that note, sir, in Ramadi, which many people consider the worst of the worst, talk about some of the progress there in terms of improving security and how that's leading to improved status of governance and economic growth.

**Reist:** The way Ramadi's kind of been done is it's been a clearing effort that Colonel [Sean B.] MacFarland [USA] out of the Ready 1st Combat Team has done from west to east across the city, and that's in process right now. But in the areas where there's been a persistent presence, increased IP, things like that, there is where we look at the atmospherics for a few more shops open, more kids on the street, things like that.

I can give you an example. Right around the government center, there were some buildings that had been just absolutely destroyed. . . . Those buildings were dropped, and they were dropped because they could not be repaired. There was a contract to remove the rubble. It took a lot to even get a contractor to go in there under the auspices of a safe enough umbrella to do the rubble cleanup. But that's the sort of thing that just started right before Christmas. Then, okay, you're a local citizen, and you see your community starting to be cleaned up, that's one of those visible signs that we hope link towards the tipping point of, "Geez, they're picking up my city." And commerce is just starting to show. Even if they see traffic on the street in a positive way, as opposed to a bomb going off.

I'll go back to Gladwell's *The Tipping Point*, when [Mayor Rudolph W. L.] Giuliani cleaned up New York City, one of the things that Gladwell emphasizes is, he painted the subway cars to keep 'em clean, and just kept painting them every night, so when somebody sprayed graffiti on them, repaint it—clean it up. . . . I think there's a basic thing in every human being that they just want things to be a little bit better. They want a little bit more money in their pocket. They want a little bit more food on their table. They want their neighborhood to be a little safer. And there's a basic understanding that when they see that, they will want more. And that will continue to take off. That's a very, very long fuse that's hard to light. But we hope that once it's lit, that fuse will really burn faster and faster as it gets closer to the nice boom at the end—a good boom, not a bad boom.

**Wheeler:** Sir, on the concept of the provincial capitol, what have been some of the thoughts behind the decision to stay with the traditional government center despite the fact that it is in ruins

versus building, moving to another location that might be more secure and more . . .

**Reist:** The government center is not in ruins. . . . The governor works in there, he's got workers there, Civil Affairs does some business out of there, we've got a company of Marines living there, for example, so the building itself, no. . . . Is it a fortress right now? Yes. I don't think anybody would deny it. . . . I guess a translation into an American analogy, it's kind of like the Alamo. If you leave that, you're saying you've given up. And the governor is adamant about that. . . . He told me a story once about walking by the government center as a young boy. He's from Ramadi, so he has seen that as the kind of central hub, the Alamo, since he was a kid. Even departing for a short time while things get better, he pushed back hard on that. . . .

**Wheeler:** The road ahead, sir—your last few weeks here, as you turn over to II MEF, what's going to be your advice to them—where to focus their energies, where do we go from here?

**Reist:** Keep pressing a lot of the economic things. We've got a business conference in Dubai. The governor is going there. Why are we going to Dubai? We're matching up businessmen from inside Iraq with folks from the Middle East to attract investment, not just in al-Anbar, but there's a couple other provinces that are participating with us. We initiated this here, though, and we're working with the governor. And these are the sort of things you need to do. This is the sort of thing I think the governor needs to do. He needs to look internally at some things, but he needs to look outside. That's why going to Amman, look outside, and bring some things in.

The wireless local loop [telecommunications system]—we need to get this thing up and running. It's going to be huge—tips hotline, voice and data capability. The world runs on the Internet today. These folks need to open up their horizons. And the Internet will do that for them. I'm not talking about subverting the Muslim religion, or the culture, or anything, but just think of what that's going to do. They're going to get online, and they're going to be able to expose themselves [to more ideas and information].

I've met some of these folks; they are extremely well educated. I meet with one guy who's got his college degree from USC [University of Southern California] and his master's from MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]. He's smart; he's a lot smarter than I'm ever going to be. Some of these guys get it. And they're just looking to get it more.



Interview 11

***Enabling the Awakening, Part II***

## **Brigadier General Robert B. Neller**

*Deputy Commanding General (Operations)  
I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)  
Multi National Force • West*

February 2006 to February 2007

Brigadier General Robert B. Neller served as the deputy commanding general for operations of I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) in al-Anbar Province from February 2006 to February 2007. He was promoted to major general in 2007 and assumed the presidency of Marine Corps University in September 2009.

In this interview, Brigadier General Neller describes the significant improvements in the Iraqi security forces in 2006 and the transition of battlespace those gains have allowed. He emphasizes the role that tribal engagement has played in the growth of Iraqi forces. He discusses the resiliency of the insurgency and the lingering level of violence despite enhanced Iraqi and coalition force capabilities. He also details the success of the Marine air-ground task force in 2006-2007 despite the loss of some forces to stem the sectarian violence in Baghdad and comments on the role of the media in the conflict and the impact of information operations.

Brigadier General Neller was interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler on 23 January 2007 at Camp Fallujah, Iraq.

**Lieutenant Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler:** Sir, if you'd begin by going back to the beginning of the tour, as you took over the operations in this area, what were your key priorities, key objectives, as you came on deck for the year?

**Brigadier General Robert B. Neller:** Before I even arrived at I MEF [I Marine Expeditionary Force] in the summer of 2005, I MEF had already put together a planning team and had done a detailed mission analysis and COA [course of action] development and had written a mission statement that said that their task was to focus on development of the Iraqi security forces [ISF] and then conduct

counterinsurgency operations. So we felt that our success here was going to be our ability to develop Iraqi security forces, the idea being [that] as we developed them and transitioned, we would then transfer authority to them and transfer increasing levels of responsibility to them, and that we would reposition our forces into those areas where we had not yet been able to do that. Conceptually, we thought that was going to happen, basically from the east to the west, or an inside-out approach. That was the plan.

As it's turned out, we have focused on ISF development. I know the Iraqi army is not any larger in number, but capability-wise, they're better trained. We transitioned a significant amount of battlespace to 1st Division. The number of police has gone from somewhere in the neighborhood of 2,000 arguably trained, and whether they're going to work or not, and I'd say anywhere between 8,000 and 10,000 police.

The effect that we wanted is taking place more in an outside-in, or west to east, flow. In other words, the level of violence in the west has decreased faster than the level of violence in the center. Right now, the level of violence in the eastern portion of the AO [area of operation] is much higher than it is in the center or the west. So we've transitioned the battlespace of the force and repositioned forces in the west because of the level of the Iraqi security forces, particularly the numbers out west that we plan on transitioning the battlespace. So we executed the plan, yes, maybe not in the way the operational design was, but I think we executed the plan, in some places faster than we thought, in some places not as fast.

It seems to be the type of fight you really can't measure progress in days, or weeks, or even months. You have to look at it over a longer period of time. We've only been here three years, going on four, and that isn't a long time to conduct this type of a fight. How long will it take is another question. The other question is how much time do you have, and I don't know really the answer to either of those.

**Wheeler:** Sir, the deviations from the plan you just described, or things turning out differently than anticipated, has that been driven more by the uneven development of the ISF, enemy action, or a combination of those things?

**Neller:** I think it's a combination. I think we were surprised early on that we were unable to recruit men from al-Anbar to join the army. I look back at it now, and I think we were probably naive. The people out here, being Sunni, and a very large retired army crew, they do not view the army as their army. They were very reluctant to, particularly out west, join the army at first. The mayor in Fallujah promised us 5,000 recruits, [but] we've gotten basically at the end of the day a very small number. So that said, people have been willing to join the police. However, the police are subject to murder and intimidation since they live out in town, so there's the disadvantage. So it's a mixed bag.

We've had really great success with the police out west and now with the police in Ramadi, because of tribal engagement and civic support. When we got here, there were police in Fallujah, and there was the beginning of police in Ramadi, and maybe a few guys in al-Qaim. Now there's police, some form of police force, in every city of the province except for Rutbah, and we think that that may turn here soon.

I think the thing that we really didn't understand or appreciate to the extent that we do now is the importance of tribal engagement—engaging the different tribes, tribal support for the people joining the army and joining the police. We also didn't think that we would have issues with literacy, joining the army or the police. We believed the almanac that Iraq had a certain percentage of literacy. In the far west and out in the country, it's a rural area. Going to school out there, particularly for men, is not, the academic situation is not real good.

We've tried, unsuccessfully, to get the Iraqi Ministry of Defense to waive the literacy requirement, and they haven't done that. We tried to get them to start a reading and a literacy program; they haven't done that. Over the last month, we finally did it ourselves. We actually took guys out of an Iraqi army division, set up a division, and set them up in Camp Habbaniyah to bring guys who couldn't pass the initial screening for reading and teach them—in effect, teach them to pass the test. That was a real missed opportunity for the Iraqi government, to have a national literacy program. It's

difficult to have a democratic society when people can't read or be employed in a lot of areas. This society is one which is not based on literary communication. It's based on oral and visual communication. You see it on TV or you hear it from your friends, or your tribe, or the sheikh, or from the imam, and then passing it in verbal information. That's the way they communicate.

***Wheeler:*** Is that cultural difference why you think you got the push back, or the lack of action, on setting up the programs?

***Neller:*** I don't know why we got the push back. Honestly, I don't know. I think it was just another thing. We didn't have anybody to champion it, so we championed it ourselves. We've found that in several cases, we've had ideas of things that we thought were good ideas, and there's a lot going on, everybody has needs, and so we ended up being our own advocate.

***Wheeler:*** Sir, when you look back over the tour, what have been the greatest challenges that you've faced in the operational realm and, subsequently, how have you overcome them?

***Neller:*** I think a lot of what we've done has proved to be much more difficult than what we thought. Life support and administrative support of the Iraqi army and the police, the simple pain, the Herculean task, spent a huge amount of energy on that. Life support, even in the army, getting them their gear, we're giving them all that stuff. That's really not an issue anymore, but it was something that took some effort on our part. I think trying to figure out what was the right operational design for each area, whether you should berm an area or restrict movement, or whether you should give or not give certain support, find out who the sheikhs were, who were the real sheikhs that could influence the action.

I think we were surprised to some degree about the resiliency of the insurgency at the beginning, and that's probably the most discouraging point. We have killed a very substantial number of these guys, and yet the level of attacks has continued to go up. So we can attribute that to the fact that we've gone in areas where we weren't located before, and we've dispersed the force, and we've got more surfaces for them to contact against. Or that they're just, that

the insurgency is very resilient and they're able to regenerate. We know they're very, very well financed, and again, it's a vicious circle of, "Why can't you hire people, why can't you put people to work?" Well, if you try and it comes from the Coalition, then they get murdered, or threatened, or intimidated, or killed, and therefore there's no work. So when there's no work, they can take money to participate in the insurgency. There is a certain level of zealotry involved in the insurgency, but there's also a certain level of "it's just business" and a way to feed my family.

***Wheeler:*** On the other hand, looking back over the year, what have been the greatest successes the MEF has achieved in its time here?

***Neller:*** I think all those things surrounding the ISF. I think we increased the number of police and the proper provision of administrative support, life support, base support, putting the support on the army and the police, facilities, communication, setting up a joint coordination center for the city and the provincial joint coordination center in Ramadi.

Repositioning forces. If you looked at the battlespace geometry of this AO and put it on a time-lapse photography, it would appear to be a moving, amoebic-like force as people have repositioned, moving on, adjusted for maybe the loss of forces or reduction of forces and repositioning of forces. We operated at a deficit almost from the day we got here. We lost 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, had to go to Baghdad and support that, and then soon after that was over, we lost the Army battalion that was out at Rawah, so that one was never replaced. When the 2d of the 28th [2d Brigade Combat Team of the 28th Infantry Division (Pennsylvania Army National Guard)] were replaced by the Ready 1st Combat Team at the very, very last minute, we had a net loss of a battalion. So the weapons, and combat power, and the ability to generate presence have diminished ever since we've been here, until the MEU [Marine expeditionary unit] came aboard. We mitigated that by repositioning forces and taking risks in certain areas and also positioning or developing the ISF. We're having them assume greater responsibility for certain areas, which allows us to reposition with our forces and the Iraqi army. I'm very proud of the flexibility

and the planning process that took place that allowed us to keep this thing going. . . . This has been I think very innovative, very flexible, very aggressive, very much taking calculated risks in order to try to improve the security environment. The downside is that we haven't been as successful as we would like to have been in reducing the level of violence.

**Wheeler:** You mentioned a couple possible explanations for that in terms of causes. What would be the one that you would point to, that you think is the leading cause, for why the violence has not decreased, despite the successes in many areas?

**Neller:** I think when the Samarra mosque was bombed, that changed the whole calculus for the violence. That let the sectarian genie out of the bottle, and all the violence, the increase in violence everywhere has been fed by that. Anbar is a—with the fighting that goes on in Baghdad, the Sunni-Shi'a—Anbar, because of the demographics, is a friendly place. You remember that the insurgents, they have families here, they have tribal connections here, and the people, even though they may not support them, they're not going to rat them out. And because of the empty and wide spaces out here, it's very easy to hide in plain sight. It's just another tent in the desert, another Bedouin sheet tent. So I think the level of violence has gone up everywhere, to include here, and I think the level of violence here is directly related to the level of violence in Baghdad.

**Wheeler:** To what extent do you think the violence is caused by us pressing into neighborhoods where at one point the insurgents operated freely, and now they're being . . .

**Neller:** I'm sure that's some of it. If you don't want to have any violence, all you've got to do is stay on the FOB [forward operating base]. If you don't want to have any engagements, or any contact, or escalation of force, just don't go out. The downside to that is, I think we've seen in areas where we haven't been, or where we were and then subsequently left or repositioned, the insurgents will move immediately back in and establish themselves. This hasn't happened 100 percent of the time. In some places where there were police, or when the citizens will stand up and they didn't get killed, that hasn't happened.

Understandably, the majority of them don't want us here. Their answer is, "If you leave, all this would stop." Well, no, it wouldn't stop. It would stop what is happening now. And Baghdad certainly wouldn't stop. What might stop is them fighting us, because there wouldn't be anybody there to fight. And I think very clearly that the al-Qaeda-led insurgents would very quickly overwhelm the nationalists, or what's sometimes called the legitimate resistance, and make them be subjected to the will of al-Qaeda, and they would do what they have said they're going to do, which is to establish an Islamic caliphate, or Islamic state of Iraq, based out of al-Anbar.

**Wheeler:** Could you assess for me, sir, the strategy, the berming, and the enhanced security in the various cities across the province. Where has that worked best? Where is it still ongoing? Discuss that overall strategy.

**Neller:** One could make the argument that one of the bases of this fight is population control, and that we want to have some control so that we can provide security for the population, and I think the insurgents in these areas want to have some control. Keep the insurgents out, keep the good people in, and be able to provide them a secure environment so that they're confident in the security forces, and they'll also tell us when the bad guys move in on them. You can do that with entry control points to the city, you can do it with the barriers, the berms, and the badging of people, like Fallujah has a Fallujah city badge. You can do it with biometrics, all those things, providing population control, driver's license, if they had drivers' licenses—if they had a driver's license, if they had a national ID.

Where has it worked best? Well, it works to some degree everywhere. It's not perfect.

As far as physically berming of the city, the engineering effort to get it done is substantial, so if it's a large city, it's much more difficult than a small city. Geography plays a role. Are there any natural barriers, like railroad tracks or rivers or something which gives you somewhat of a barrier, so that the amount of engineering work that you have to do is less? Like every other obstacle you put in, you're going to have to figure out how to overwatch it and cover it by fire.

So the most successful berming has been normally on smaller cities, although the Haditha-Haqlaniyah-Barwanah berm has almost 25,000 meters of berm. That was substantial. Sometimes you can berm inside the city, you can put barriers, like Jersey barriers or Hescos filled with dirt to block off certain streets so that people can only enter a neighborhood through one way or two ways in. . . . I think the berming up at the triad of Haditha, Haqlaniyah, Barwanah was very successful. I mean, you can see the day it was done, the level of violence just dropped right off, because none of the bad guys wanted to be caught inside the city. Now, some of them have made their way back in, and maybe even through the ECPs [entry control points]. But we do census operations, and we get biometric data on everybody, and it will become more and more difficult to move around without having somebody be looking for you.

**Wheeler:** Could you compare then, sir, the two alternative strategies. In most of the cities, we've tried sort of an outside-in approach with the berming. Ramadi is almost a different approach with the "inkblot" strategy. How is that approach?

**Neller:** The first wave with Ramadi, we went outside. We isolated the city by using the railroad track as a berm, using the river, using ECPs on main roads to block the roads. So we did isolate Ramadi, probably not as effectively as we had hoped, and we then started to move from west to east in the city, tried to keep the Coalition forces in the front, followed by the Iraqi army, followed by the police. And we were delayed in that effort because there was a period of a couple of months when we couldn't recruit any police. That's changed, so that strategy now, we kind of push our way into the center of the city, and I would say the east-southeast portion of the city is about all that's left.

**Wheeler:** So that was really a modified form of the same strategy? It was just driven by geometry?

**Neller:** Yes.

**Wheeler:** Looking back on the tour, sir, are there any anecdotes, things that you've experienced out here that you think capture the essence of what the story's been like for you and for the MEF as a whole?

**Neller:** I think you asked me what I'm frustrated with, and I'd say when you do information ops [operations] and everybody opines and wrings their hands about why aren't we winning the operation with information ops. I think the answer is very simple. The Western media is the most powerful information operations tool in the world, and they tell the story they want to tell. We try to get them to tell our story, but they get to choose. Whereas the insurgency, al-Qaeda, the Arab street, most of the media outlets that cater to that particular clientele tell their story rapidly, quickly, immediately. We timed it the other day. We had a tank attacked with an IED [improvised explosive device], and it caught on fire, and an hour and 45 minutes later it was on Al Jazeera. A couple hours after that it was on video. Now, why is that? Because that's who they cater to. They cater to Arabs who feel that the West has been unjust to them, and [that] the Israeli situation and Palestine situation is a great injustice to the Arabs, and that the invasion of Iraq is unjust and unfair, [that] this is all about America wanting to steal their oil.

To counteract that, we can set up our own media outlets, but nobody's going to listen to that. They certainly aren't. So I guess the question is, how do you get either the Western media or the Arab media to tell our story, the story that, hey, we came here. You can argue about the reasons we came here, but we're here, and we're trying to do a good thing. We're trying to improve the life of the average Iraqi, trying to give the average Iraqi an opportunity for choice and for economic development. We're not going to be here forever. We are going to leave. We don't want your oil. We're here to help you. Why do you continue to persist in this fighting when all it does is delay the reconstruction of your country? They watch the TV, whether it's Al-Iraqia or Al Arabiya or Al Jazeera, and all they see is IED after IED strike after IED strike after IED. The message is [that] the insurgency is doing great things, the Web pages, they cue them for donations all over the world.

And yet the Western media, and I know that they're required to remain balanced in their reporting. One could argue whether they maintain that balance. I mentioned, before we deployed, I went to a course at Carlisle [PA, at the U.S. Army War College], the

CFLCC, Combined Forces Land Component Commander Course, and they're like, "It's a media battle." One of the four members of the panel was from Al Jazeera, and I said to the guy, after they gave their little introductory talk, I said basically the same thing I told you: "Hey, we think we're doing a good thing. We think we're trying to help. We don't understand why they're trying to kill us. We're trying to rebuild their schools, fix their power, fix their water, fix their streets. We can be out doing this, but these guys just can't get away from the fact that they feel like shooting at us and killing us. How do I tell our story to the Arab street, through your TV station? How do I tell that story?"

He goes, "You don't."

I said, "You don't?"

[He replied,] "You know I can't say that. If I printed that, nobody would watch my show and I would lose all my advertising."

Okay, you're like, "All right, I got it."

I'm not whining at the media for any of our failures, but I guess I would pose the question, what if the media really wanted us to be successful? How would that change their reporting? And I certainly think they do want us to be successful. I do think they want democracy, I do think they want economic opportunity. I do think it would be difficult to discern that from their reporting.

**Wheeler:** When you say media, Western or Arabic?

**Neller:** Any. It is somewhat ironic that on the Arabic media, you watch, and [they have] very attractive young Arabic women announcing the news, [yet] when there is an Islamic caliphate, they'll all be home, burka'd up, having children. And they can't see that.

**Wheeler:** Given all that you just described, sir, is there an answer in the IO campaign?

**Neller:** I don't know. I think you just try to reach out, like we've tried to reach out aggressively with the media, to try to tell your story, try to get them to be balanced and fair. It's the way you report. I had a reporter with me, and we went out and saw the police out

west, talked to him about all the increase in police and how many there were. We went to a police station, and obviously they had concerns. It's a young police force. And I thought it was a great story, and, hey, al-Anbar police are increasing by X thousand. All he wanted to talk about was one guy said he had a pay problem. That's all he wanted to talk about in the whole article. Very discouraging. But that's the risk you take. They're going to see the world from where they sit. . . . So that was a teaching point.

**Wheeler:** And in the end, obviously, he printed the story that focused on the negative as opposed to the . . .

**Neller:** That was my opinion. He would probably disagree with that. And the next day, he wrote another story which was a little more positive. We're not Pollyannaish out here. There are good things going on, good things for the Iraqi people and the Iraqi nation. You don't hear that that often. There's certainly enough problems that you could keep busy reporting on that, if that was your propensity to do.

**Wheeler:** Is there more that we could be doing to try to shape that? As you said, you can kind of show both sides, and they're going to pick what they're going to pick, but is there more that we can be doing from an IO standpoint to steer that?

**Neller:** I don't know. We put out all the IO messages and flyers and public pronouncements. If no one's going to pick them up, and no one's going to print them, and no one's going to read them, they don't have the effect they should have. If you put them on your own TV or radio station, and no one watches it because they think it's propaganda, you're not having effects.

**Wheeler:** You mentioned before, sir, that the primary medium in the Arab world is verbal. Some would argue that the greatest IO tool that we have is the individual Marine out on patrol, talking to people in the neighborhood. Has there been a broader effort to focus that as an IO tool, from your perspective, . . . to harness the power of all those individual squads out there?

**Neller:** That's part of why you have to go out on the streets. You have to put a face on us. You have to put a face on the occupier. If all they see is guys driving by all buttoned up in Humvees with

machine-gun turrets, and everybody's got their sunglasses on, it just fulfills that perception. But our inability to speak really hurts us. There's risk when you go out and talk to the local people. I wish we did more of it. I wish we were down at the al-Anbar University teaching a class on civics, but unfortunately, that hasn't been achievable through security.

The most effective tool we have is the kindness, and the compassion, and the discipline, and the courage of Marines and soldiers and sailors. But unfortunately, most of the time they're doing operational things where it's kill, capture, do another op.





Interview 12  
*Partnering with the  
Tribes in Ramadi*

## Colonel Sean B. MacFarland, USA

*Commanding Officer  
1st Brigade Combat Team  
1st Armored Division, U.S. Army  
Multi National Force • North*

January 2006-June 2006

*Multi National Force • West*

June 2006 to February 2007

Colonel Sean B. MacFarland is a career Army cavalry and armor officer who served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. His 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, the “Ready First,” spent six months in west Ninewa Province as part of Multi National Force-North before moving to Ramadi to serve under the control of I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward). Colonel MacFarland’s brigade had a battalion of Marines (1st Battalion, 6th Marines), a Marine boat unit (Dam Support Unit 3, 1st Platoon, comprised of Marines from 4th Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion), and a Marine detachment from 4th Civil Affairs Group under his command.

In this interview, Colonel MacFarland describes the changes during the brigade’s tenure in Ramadi associated with the Awakening movement. He discusses the strategies employed to develop the Iraqi security forces in his area, as well as their growing independence. He also describes the joint nature of his command and the successful collaboration between elements of all services.

Colonel MacFarland was interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler on 13 December 2006 at Camp Ramadi, Iraq.

***Lieutenant Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler:*** Once you assumed control of the battlespace, what was your focus, initially? What were your first objectives in AO [area of operation] Topeka?

**Colonel Sean B. MacFarland:** When I got here, my first priority was to complete the isolation of the city.\* There were still too many ways into the city for insurgents. And shortly after we got here, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was killed, and we decided that we would jump over the next phase of the operations, which was shaping, which was developing the Iraqi security forces and growing them, and go straight to decisive operations, which meant installing combat outposts throughout the city with what Iraqi army and Iraqi police we had, which at the time was not a lot.

So it became a matter of necessity being the mother of invention, where we were kind of deliberate and seized one neighborhood at a time rather than seizing numerous combat outposts in one fell swoop. Of course, the limiting factor there was availability of barrier materials, material handling equipment, and engineers to install all these COPs [combat outposts]. But in June [2006], we began that process, and then we just basically did shaping operations in parallel with our decisive operations. General [George W.] Casey [Jr., USA] and General [Peter W.] Chiarelli [USA] came down here, and we were able to make a good case for retaining five maneuver task forces in Ramadi.

We were able to maintain that momentum, which is a good thing, because the fruits of those operations are only now just being realized as, one by one, the local tribes are beginning to flip from either hostile to neutral or neutral to friendly. And that's been probably one of the most decisive aspects of what we've done here, is bringing those tribes onto our side of the fence. That has enabled us to massively accelerate Iraqi police recruiting, from 20 to 30 a month to routinely 700 guys will show up, of whom we'll take 400, because a lot of them are illiterate or have bad ID cards. But they'll come back the next month with the right ID cards, and they'll get in the next month.

And then the tribes have formed a group, called the al-Anbar Rescue Committee by some. They call it the Awakening, the Sahwa

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\* Initiated under 2d Brigade, 28th Infantry Division (Pennsylvania National Guard), at the direction of I Marine Expeditionary Unit (Forward).

al-Anbar. And this group has initially begun actively targeting al-Qaeda in their tribal areas while sending off their military-age males to serve in the Iraqi police forces and have now begun integrating themselves into the provincial government. So that's all been very exciting, and we've been working with them.

They've also begun forming Emergency Response Units, which we're still grappling with the support issues, and command and control, and a whole host of questions. But it's the kind of problems that you want to have, because now we have more friendly forces than we almost know what to do with. When we got down here, we were kind of alone and unafraid. So we have an embarrassment of riches, so to speak.

**Wheeler:** How does that pose challenges in itself, sir, almost controlling some of these newfound forces that you have, who aren't necessarily 100 percent on the same sheet?

**MacFarland:** Well, one of the things, like I said, shaping operations, we had to do in parallel with our decisive operations. And up north I was responsible for the entire 3d Iraqi Army Division, partnered with me, plus a brigade of border troops. So I had four brigades, plus a division, that I was working with up there. And we had a number of programs in place up there to train their officers, develop their command and control, and their division-level troops, and provide kind of finishing school-type training for their junior officers, actually all the soldiers and police. What that gave them is the ability to stand up and fight a little better than the average Iraqi army soldier or Iraqi policeman. Iraqi police come back from Jordan trained, but not trained to fight in an urban environment, in a paramilitary role. So we give them that training, and we have not had a single Iraqi police station or Iraqi police squad defeated, overrun. In fact, they routinely destroy suicide VBIEDs [vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices] at standoff distances. I'd venture to say that the Iraqi police have killed more suicide VBIED drivers than suicide VBIED drivers have killed Iraqi policemen, since we have been here.

We transported a lot of those programs down here. We run our own training camp here on Camp Ramadi, called Camp Phoenix.

And we put about 100 or so either police or soldiers, Iraqi army soldiers, through it each week. It's run by my artillery battalion. Over time, they've trained up a cadre of Iraqi army NCOs [noncommissioned officers] who actually do most of the hands-on training for both army and police, which is good, because that builds up police-army cooperation from jump street. And then of course we've reached out to the 7th IA [Iraqi Army] Division and the brigade MTT's [military transition teams]. And we have a number of embed programs and combined targeting meetings, and so forth and so on, which has really built up the partnership at the command and control level.

More importantly, when I put out a combat outpost, it's never—well, I shouldn't say *never*—but it's usually a U.S. company with an Iraqi army company living in the same buildings, eating the same chow, and operating side by side. And that has tremendously accelerated the professionalism of the Iraqi army, when you have a one-to-one partnership experience like that. It's almost one soldier, one Marine, per *jundi* [Iraqi soldier], in some cases more than one soldier or Marine per *jundi*. And now it's sometimes soldiers and Marines, *jundis* and *shirta* [Iraq police officer]—police, Iraqi army, and U.S., all living under the same roof, operating together. That really mitigates any challenges that I might have had with dealing with the Iraqi army because they're living cheek by jowl with my own soldiers, who I have very good control over. So that's one of the ways that we've done that.

Over time, we have turned over a number of these combat outposts to Iraqi army control and then have turned to purely Iraqi police control, once we have beaten down the enemy resistance to the point where the army alone, or the army with the police, or just the police alone, can handle it all by themselves. So they go through a confidence-building period, and then we move out. And in those combat outposts, we have well-established leadership, and there's never really a problem with controlling them.

**Wheeler:** What do you see as the next phase of that type of approach here in Ramadi?

**MacFarland:** Well, we'll just continue doing more of the same. We have the ink spot strategy. All of the ink spots haven't connected up with one another yet and completely covered Ramadi, like the Sherwin-Williams commercial, where the paint covers the globe. We're working toward that end state, but as the tribes come over to our side, more and more, they want to stand up some sort of security force presence in their own tribal areas, to keep al-Qaeda out of there. And so, over time, what I expect is because of the great acceleration we've had in Iraqi police recruiting, is the city of Ramadi will be predominantly patrolled by Iraqi police, with Iraqi army really only in selected locations, mostly outside of the city. Then outside of the city, we'll have army and police working together, wherever al-Qaeda tries to establish a safe haven. And of course our role will diminish over time.

**Wheeler:** Is there a problem, or is there a gray area between tribal militia and heavy tribal recruiting of IPs [Iraqi police]? Have you sensed any . . .

**MacFarland:** There was a crossover point. When the tribes began to work with us, they began sending their young men off to Iraqi police training. The first combat outposts, or IP stations we stood up were in the tribal heartland so that the IPs that were going off to Jordan for training didn't have to worry about the safety of their loved ones while they were serving as police. After they sent off about 600 or 700 guys to training, they said, you know, we need to take a knee for about a month until some of these guys start coming back from training, because it's about a three- to four-month turnaround, because they needed to keep enough of their tribal militia folks around them to secure their families. Once we had that crossover point, which I think was in September [2006], we were back up to 400 recruits being shipped per month, and there's been no turning back since then. So we're up to about two-thirds of our quota here of police, and we'll keep on pressing. The tribal militias, to an extent, have been absorbed into the Iraqi security forces, which is what we wanted, either the Iraqi police or now the newly established ERUs [emergency response units] are really what used to be tribal militia.

**Wheeler:** Could you describe the capabilities of the ERUs?

**MacFarland:** I wish I could. They're just still standing up. Very limited weaponry. They seem to be well disciplined, but they just don't have a lot of equipment at all. I mean, as you would expect. These guys are just kind of right off the farm.

**Wheeler:** Sir, as you look back on your experience here, what are some of the most vivid memories you have, throughout your tour, but especially your time here in AO Topeka?

**MacFarland:** Well, we've had a couple of interesting days here. One of them I would say would be the 24th of July, which was the first and really only massively synchronized counterattack that the enemy was able to mount, where we had I think 20-some attacks in less than half an hour and all five maneuver battalions were in contact at the same time. The enemy paid a price for that. We killed about 30 of them and lost two of our own, but that was probably the most significant resistance that we've met since we've been here. Since then, enemy resistance has been on a steady decline.

Another very memorable thing was the day that I went into Sheikh Sattar's house, where they were kind of holding their "Philadelphia convention," writing their manifesto, and forming the Awakening. I felt like I was kind of on the ground floor of an historic moment there.

Another memorable day, which unfortunately I was traveling back from R&R leave—it was very frustrating—was the day the tribes in the [Jadellah] Sofia stood up to al-Qaeda and we had to rush to their assistance. And since then, we've been very active up in the Sofia area. But I know I'm not going in chronological sequence here. Also, the very beginning of our operations, where we, the first thing we did was we opened up the railway bridge on the south side of Ramadi, and pushed a company across there, and established our first combat outpost [COP Iron]. It felt a little bit like crossing the Rubicon. There was no turning back at that point.

Lots of memorable days, a lot of good ones, some bad ones, [like] when I lost two officers and we lost six soldiers and Marines in one day on the 5th of December. We were in contact right up until midnight, all across the AO, and I think almost every battalion task

force had a KIA [killed in action] that day, with the exception of 2/37 [2d Battalion, 37th Armored Regiment, USA], so that was pretty memorable. Having some of our important visitors, like General Casey and General Chiarelli, come down here and suddenly realize that Ramadi is not an unrelenting source of bad news, that there really is progress being made here, and watching them experience that revelation. That's pretty interesting and rewarding. From that, we've been able to get the resources that we've needed to continue to make progress down here.

***Wheeler:*** Along those lines, has it been frustrating to you to be doing so many positive things here and not see very much of that show up on the network news back in the States?

***MacFarland:*** I don't care if it shows up on the news or not, as long as the newsmakers understand what's going on, the higher echelons, the chain of command. It's amazing how little of our story gets out as far as Baghdad. Our higher headquarters in Baghdad, I think the commanders understand when they come out and they see it, but so much of what we're doing here is being filtered at the staff level that it gets lost. I had a reporter in here earlier today, and I was explaining to him how we're flipping these tribes one by one, and I said the thing people don't understand in the States, and you see it in the Baker-Hamilton Report, is this underlying assumption that Baghdad is Iraq and that the [Shi'a] are monolithic. Well, Baghdad is an important part of Iraq, but they are no more representative of the rest of Iraq than New York City is of the rest of New York state. You can have a totally different dynamic outside of Baghdad than you have in Baghdad. There's no sectarian violence here. There are no sects. There's one sect—Sunni—so where is all the violence coming from?

We had sectarian violence when I was up in Tal Afar. We had Sunnis and Shi'a. There, my biggest problem was keeping the Sunnis from killing the Shi'a. Here, my biggest problem is to keep al-Qaeda from killing the IPs. The IPs are absolutely the center of gravity here, and al-Qaeda recognizes them as their greatest threat, so they tend to go after the IPs, which is why I invest so much in training them. And I'll tell you that, as a nation, we've invested far

more in the training of the Iraqi army than we have in the Iraqi police, and 2006 was supposed to be the year of the police. Look at the Iraqi army MTT [military transition] teams, headed by full colonels, lieutenant colonels, 11 guys per battalion. When I got out here, the provincial PTT [police transition] team consisted of one U.S. Army major, Chemical Corps. He wasn't even an MP [military police], with really no staff. And again, an entire police district like Ramadi, we put one MP company, headed up by a captain.

And really, we're authorized as many police here, almost as many police as we are army, over 3,400 police in Ramadi. And where are all the full colonels, and the lieutenant colonels, and the majors, and the captains that are supposed to be lining up with these Iraqi police brigadier generals and major generals, like we do with the Iraqi army? They're not here. They're nowhere. We never really put our money where our mouth was on the Iraqi police, so we have formed out of hide some PTT programs and teams that have, I think, borne some fruit. But if you don't do something like that, you're not going to really make any headway on the police side. So it's painful, it's out of hide, and all that kind of stuff, but it's been worth it. . . .

***Wheeler:*** Your command, sir, this is a great example of a joint enterprise. Can you talk a little bit about some of the joys and challenges of that experience?

***MacFarland:*** Well, I'll tell you, first of all, it frustrates me somewhat that this is not recognized as a joint unit. We work for a Marine headquarters [I MEF]. I have a Marine battalion [1st Battalion, 6th Marines]. I have a Marine boat unit here [Dam Support Unit 3, 1st Platoon, comprised of Marines from 4th Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion]. I've got Marines on my staff. I've got Navy on my staff. I've got Air Force on my staff. I've got Navy doctors. I've got a Navy Catholic chaplain. I've got a Marine PAO [public affairs officer] and a Marine now S-9 [engagements/governance officer] to replace the Army S-9 who was killed [Captain Travis L. Patriquin, USA]. . . .

But because there's no JMD [joint manning document] for this brigade that authorizes a certain service for a certain position, it's

not considered a joint organization. We have [U.S. Marine] ANGLICO [air naval gunfire liaison company] on the staff. You walk around, you see the mix of uniforms everywhere you go. We have [U.S. Navy] SEALs that work with us. I call them Army SEALs because they wear Army combat uniforms and they're so well integrated, living with us out at the combat outpost, and we work so well together that I've adopted them. They like it. But it's been great. We've got SeaBees [U.S. Navy Construction Battalions] working with us. We had an Army engineer company commander putting in COP Firecracker for the Marines. He had three platoons out there. He had an Army engineer platoon. He had a SeaBee platoon and a Marine sapper platoon out there working together on that project. That's "joint" at the lowest possible level. We have Army tank platoons attached to Marine companies, and Marine companies attached to Army infantry battalions, and on and on and on, and Marine ANGLICO guys working as JTACs [joint tactical air controllers].

So it's been great. The Marines and Army each bring their own capabilities to the table, and the Marines have helped me out with some kit that I don't have, and I've helped out the Marines with some kit that they don't have. It's been a very fruitful partnership.



Interview 13  
*Counterinsurgency in  
Central Ramadi, Part I*

## Lieutenant Colonel William M. Journey

*Commanding Officer  
1st Battalion, 6th Marines*

*Assigned to 1st Brigade Combat Team  
1st Armored Division, U.S. Army*

*I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)*

September 2006 to May 2007

Lieutenant Colonel William M. Journey assumed command of 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, in October 2004, ultimately commanding the battalion for nearly three years, including a tour in Fallujah following Operation al-Fajr. During its September 2006 to May 2007 deployment, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, served in central Ramadi under the U.S. Army's 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, which fell under I Marine Expeditionary Force Command as part of Multi National Force-West.

In this interview, Lieutenant Colonel Journey describes the mission of 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, and the focus on three primary lines of operation. He details the battalion's approach to partnering with Iraqi security forces and the use of augmentation teams in addition to military transition teams and police transition teams. He outlines the battalion's strategy to protect the government center area and the role of security stations in the area of operations as well as the critical role of information operations in creating a perception of stability in the city.

Lieutenant Colonel Journey was interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler on 17 February 2007 at Camp Hurricane Point, Ramadi, Iraq.

***Lieutenant Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler:*** As you arrived here for your second tour, what did you see as the mission for 1/6 [1st Battalion, 6th Marines] in this area of operations?

***Lieutenant Colonel William M. Journey:*** Overall, our mission was to improve the security and stability of the area we were responsible

for, so that's what I perceived as our mission. By doing that, we would then facilitate the continued progression of both the Iraqi security forces taking greater responsibility and control along with the local leaders in the area and their appointed and elected officials and the government's role.

**Wheeler:** So, taking that broad mission, how did you begin to marshal your resources and forces to accomplish that?

**Journey:** Well, across the board, I think we focused on what I would call three lines of operations in our battalion. First and foremost is to neutralize those criminal and terrorist threats that would choose to do us harm. You can do that by killing or capturing them. Second would be a focus on not so much training, but employing the Iraqi security forces. And employing is training to us. So we're not running a boot-camp type of rudimentary training regime here, we're employing right along side with the Iraqi security forces, and that's both Iraqi police and Iraqi army. And third was conducting those operations in support of civil affairs units, CMO [civil-military operations], that not only provide for essential services for the people, which brings their life back to a sense of normalcy, but you also want to do those in such a way as to give you a tactical advantage, which leads back to neutralizing the insurgency and, more importantly, also supporting the elected and appointed officials and the Iraqi security force in that you want the populace to gain a new-found trust and confidence in them.

So the objective here is, . . . the key terrain is the population and in securing that population, i.e., improving the security and stability. We're gonna focus our attention on those three lines of operation. We say that we execute those concurrently, not in a linear sense. We talk about clear, hold, and build. I will tell you that we don't specifically follow clear, hold, and build. I mean, you can conduct civil-military operations which set conditions for kinetic neutralization of the insurgency. It's one street, one block at a time. What's interesting in that respect is that it's in different degrees. We think you pursue all three lines of operation concurrently, not a step at a time.

The difference is understanding that it depends on which area you're in. In one area of our AO [area of operation], you may be

conducting a significant amount of civil-military operations and getting a lot of success out of that. In another area, you may simply be discussing with key leaders future projects, economic and social development. But I don't think you should give up on any line of that operation. No matter how bad the enemy threat is in a particular area, some people might argue, well, you gotta go in and clear those enemy [insurgents] out first, and then you can begin rebuilding. I would argue against that. I agree that the security situation may not allow contractors or SeaBees [construction battalions] to actually go in and repair a water main, or a sewage line, or something of that nature. But that would not prevent me from engaging local leaders in that particular area in a discussion about how we're going to do that, and what we need to do in order to achieve that, and what benefits to them and their *wasta* [respect, clout] and the people around them are. That's my policy on how we were going to approach improving security and stability in our area of responsibility as we saw it. . . .

***Wheeler:*** One of the aspects that's impressed me as I've travelled across your AO is the degree to which your ISF [Iraqi security forces] are partnered with, working with, living with your companies, your forces out in the battlespace. How have you gone about creating that circumstance, and what's been your approach there?

***Journey:*** It was a stated mission-essential task that we undertake actions to accelerate, expand, employ the Iraqi security forces. We don't want to come back. So if we're not going to come back, we're going to have to get them stood up, moving forward in greater degrees, taking responsibility for their own security. It's an order, first and foremost. How you go about doing that? I think you'll probably see varying approaches to it. Our experience has been that if you live with, plan with, execute with [the Iraqis], you stand a greater chance of success—success being defined as their progressive increase in responsibility and leading to independent actions. So that's the end state.

A lot of times, it's built on relationships. I mean, I get my Iraqi counterpart to extend his responsibilities or undertake actions that quite frankly are dangerous, that he would prefer not to do,

sometimes simply because he doesn't wanna let me down, or because we've become friends. And he doesn't wanna do it, but he's gonna do it. I mean, I'm not opposed to their being repercussions with milestones, and I'm not talking on the political level, but when an Iraqi unit has the capability to take the next step, there are many times when they will look at you [and say], "I don't want to." I mean, why should they do more? Why should they put themselves at greater danger? Why should they work harder and impede their leave, when they know we're gonna do it? So quite frankly, as we're absolutely partnered with them, I give them the shirt off my back. And when I say, "Now I need you to do something," I expect them to do it. And if they don't, then there will be repercussions. I'll call off support to 'em.

I've never asked an Iraqi soldier to do something that I wouldn't or couldn't do, or my Marines themselves. I mean, they can see right through that. It's simply [that] you wouldn't ask another Marine unit to go into harm's way in a situation that they're not capable of handling. And we all do that. I move Iraqi soldiers around the battlefield under the same protection as Marines. We eat the same chow, attempt to live together. So we're building this together. I show them the same respect as a lieutenant colonel, or colonel, or whatever their rank is. We openly discuss options for moving forward.

The other part of this is we're taking advantage of a strength here. As we pursue our lines of operation, I mean, you would no sooner attack the old hill without the proper fire support planned in advance, so why would you approach this situation without taking full advantage of all the strengths? Iraqi police who are Sunni, and live here, and can see a terrorist a mile away, who have their own ability to do indigenous R&S [reconnaissance and surveillance], which we have them moving around in plain clothes, undercover, coordinated, validating targets on a regular basis for us, where no American could go or uncover the information that they are. I mean, you should take full advantage of that.

In order to do that, your operations have to be synchronized with them. Some people will argue there are risks associated with that. I agree, there are risks. There is some high-value targeting

information that we do not share with them. But there is other intelligence information that we do share, that there are risks of the target getting away, or risks to our Marines. But you're never going to move forward if you're not working in a combined sense with their operations and intelligence sections. So that's been our approach to it, in addition to, we say we're a combined action battalion. You hear about the old CAP platoons [combined action platoons] of Vietnam. We are a combined action battalion. . . . We provide an 11-man MTT team, you know, military transition team. That was an "A" team we put together. All those guys were on the last deployment with us.

If I could invest \$11 in the stock market and get nearly \$500 back, that would be a pretty good investment. So for providing 11 quality Marines and a sailor to our MTT team, in return I've got an Iraqi battalion of about 550 personnel who can now be effectively—or more effectively—employed. That's a pretty good investment, or bang for your buck. So we did that. Secondly, when people ask what else are you doing to support the Iraqi security force—"have you put any more people with your MTT team?"—I would say "yeah, about a thousand." Everybody in this battalion, if you look at my original intent, no one says "no" to the Iraqi police or Iraqi army unless there is a damn good reason for it because that's why we're here.

We partner down, you have to partner down to the platoon level. A MTT team is 11 guys. It's set up to advise a battalion staff. Now when you assess the battalion that you're partnered with, it may require partnership down at the company and the platoon level. A MTT team is not manned to provide that. And when you piecemeal two guys from the MTT team, and you put them down at the company level, now you've hurt your opportunities for developing the logistics, sustainment and C2 of that Iraqi army battalion when you do that. So it's the responsibility of the partnered U.S. battalion to pick up that relationship, training, and deployment. Or that's our sense of it.

So for that reason, you see Iraqi companies co-located with Marine companies, and there is a partner relationship that exists company

commander to company commander, platoon commanders to platoon commanders, you know, *jundi* [individual soldier] to our team leaders and lance corporals. And pretty soon, the training that is occurring is nothing more than mimicking. You see how it is to be done correctly from pre-combat checks and inspections to execution. Pretty soon you then can transition to supported and supporting relationships. For example, in Alpha Company is the supported company, and the Iraqi army is supporting them in a raid or a cordon and search. A month into it, you should be able to change that relationship, and the Iraqi army company is now the supported and Alpha Company is supporting. So that would be a progression.

That may have been more than you were interested to hear about military transition teams and training. I'm pretty disgusted when I watch TV and I hear people say, "We need to do more to train the Iraqi army." I want to ask them to define it, define what training is. What the hell are you talking about? These guys are absolutely capable, the ones we are working with, to conduct security operations. Now, do they need specialized training if you want them to develop EOD [explosive ordnance disposal], boat, special ops? Sure. But day in and day out, they can conduct security operations. Their greatest limitation right now is manning. I mean, an Iraqi battalion is about 850 people. It's only manned at about 550. And then when you take that 550, and you send one-third of it on leave at any one time, you're only working with about a 300-man unit. [With] 15 guys in an Iraqi platoon, there's no way they're going to assume battlespace. And then when you send another third on leave while they're swapping out, two-thirds of that Iraqi undermanned battalion is gone. No way they're going to achieve any level of independence until they overcome the manning issue. . . .

***Wheeler:*** What types of functions are being performed by your augmentation teams down with your Iraqis? What types of tasks are you asking them to do to be a force multiplier, to make the Iraqis more effective?

***Journey:*** The short answer is, they're there to facilitate employment—operational and employment focus. That's what our augmentation teams are there for. Typically, a PTT team [police

transition team], those guys, they've got a [lot] of paperwork they've got to do. They're accounting for gear, they've got higher headquarter reports. . . . And what's most important to me? Employment and operational focus. And it has to be synchronized with all the other efforts that are ongoing in the battlespace. The police force that operates in this AO, the police, the Iraqi army, and the Coalition force all have to try and work as one element. So that augmentation team there is the focus on that employment piece of it. So he's not necessarily inundated with those other tasks. More importantly, I will tell you, in the police, we have eight Marines who live in the police stations 24-7, which didn't happen beforehand. When there's time-sensitive information that comes into a police station, which it does, there is a fleeting target of opportunity. Typically a police force couldn't move on that because they'd be afraid they'd get shot by Coalition forces, at night, moving around. . . . Now with Marines living there 24-7, you know they're going to pick up.

I sat down with the police chiefs with the Iraqi army and said, "all we have to do is coordinate. We're all three trying to do the same things. Sometimes we're going to do them together, sometimes we're going to do them independent. But every time, we're going to do them, and they're going to be coordinated so we don't shoot each other." Pretty simple stuff, they all understand that. They say, "Very good, we don't want to do that. You're right, this has been a problem in the past." So now they just pick up the radio [and] my augmentation team chief says [that] the police want to go to this sector to execute this mission. I'm able to provide him with up-to-date intelligence; "okay the route's clear, there's not an IED [improvised explosive device] there," or there is one there. I'm trying to protect them just the same I would a Marine unit. What does the police chief need? Does he need casevac [casualty evacuation]? QRF [quick reaction force] support? I've got fixed wing overhead. I'll provide you up-to-date information on what our ISR [intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance] assets are seeing, all of which enable his mission to be successful, which at the end of the day, if we're capturing and killing bad guys, it's a win for the whole team.

So that's what our augmentation teams are doing on a full-time basis down there. They have the trust, and respect, and friendship of those that they work with because they live there 24-7. And those relationships facilitate expanding and accelerating that particular ISF element's employment. You just can't show up every now and then and expect to get anything. I'm not some cultural guru, but it just doesn't work that way.

**Wheeler:** The next question I have is how you, basically, evolved this battlespace during the time that you've been here. You fell in on a situation where most of the preceding battalions' forces were focused here on the western side, closer to Hurricane Point. Talk about how that's changed over time from the initial layout of your forces to what it is today and how that's happened.

**Journey:** You always go back to "think like the enemy." Operations have to be enemy-focused, not reduction of internal friction. If I were the enemy, you have the provincial government center of all al-Anbar Province in the middle of our AO. If I were the bad guy, every other day, if I can go down with only two insurgents, empty a magazine and shoot at the government center, then I get great press out of that. And the press is, "Al-Anbar Province is defunct, the government center is under siege, there is no progress, there is no stability." What an economy of force for an insurgency. To be strong everywhere is to be weak everywhere. I don't have to be strong all over al-Anbar Province, I just need two guys to shoot at the government center and it looks like I'm kicking everybody's ass in al-Anbar Province. So that was my assessment. If I'm here to facilitate eventual provincial control—Iraqi control—then you've got to be able to go to the government center without getting blown up.

Having said that, a deliberate operation was not going to happen in one week or one month. You can't rush to failure given the threat of IEDs and sub-surface IEDs. So we started one block at a time, and then basically we just started clearing from west to east. You provide for your own secure LOCs [lines of communication], and when you clear an area, you stay there. If you go in and you wreak havoc for two or three days and you leave, well, the bad guys are just going to come back. People aren't going to help you. Everything is driven by

information. The first question the people are going to ask you is, "When are you leaving?" You've got to show them you're not going to leave. I mean, if they tell you things and then you leave, they're going to be dead. So it's got to be based on permanent presence.

So we started clearing areas, seizing terrain. We established a secure facility. That secure facility enables introduction, full time, of Iraqi security forces. It all builds on itself. Iraqi police and Iraqi army don't have the enablers to put up Jersey and T barriers in a hostile area, so they're going to sit out on the periphery and never go down where it's dangerous. I happen to believe that there should be shared hardship and shared danger. This is their country. But in order to move them into that portion of battlespace, they [should] take part in a combined operation to clear it. They take part in a combined operation to build the facility, fill the sandbags, build the positions, and then they live there with you.

So we've moved basically from west to east in that clearing evolution. It's all conducted, like I said, consistent along all three lines of operation. . . . We coined the name "security station" because a "combat outpost" don't sound like things are getting back to normal. So we told people we were building police stations. Our permanent positions are future police stations. And so we called them security stations. So now they're combined security stations, some of which will, in fact, be police stations. They're obviously manned by police now. Soon thereafter, you want to start providing for essential services in and around those security stations. I mean, "okay, that's great, you just came in, you ran off the bad guys, I appreciate that. Now what else is in it for me?" And that's where, as we were conducting these operations, CERP [Commander's Emergency Response Program] projects, CMO, economic development, opportunities for jobs and improved essential services closely followed to the tune of almost \$3 million worth of projects now that are ongoing. So pretty soon, you have people on the other side of town going, "When are we going to get some of that?" Well, as soon as you start taking an active role in helping us help you, then as you can see, good things and good opportunities start presenting themselves. So now you're leveraging CMO. Even though you may not be building, you're still leveraging that line of operation to neutralize the insurgency. . . .

**Wheeler:** As you've moved from west to east, right now, the sort of forward edge, as you mentioned before, the enemy's FLOT [forward line of troops] has been pushed out now to the Qatana area. What's next on the horizon during the remaining time that you have here?

**Journey:** Well, as you know, we were extended an anticipated 60 to 90 days, but I think it's only going to be about 45. I'll turn the clock back just a little bit. When we first got here, our advanced party was composed of myself, my company commanders, and my primary staff. We came on the advanced party because once you TOA [transfer of authority], you need to be in the execution mode, not the find-your-head-from-your-ass mode. One of the things we did is we established a 120-day plan, called a four-block plan, which had some significant milestones set against time, although they were conditions-based and event-driven. It was our glide path to accomplish the things we just talked about, which led us up to about January the 12th. And all of the things we've discussed were on the plan and were, quite frankly, were achieved.

When we received notification of the extension, we sat back down as a staff and with the commanders, and we were determined not to slow-roll this thing. We're going to treat it completely as a new deployment, because for all intents and purposes, it was. We put together another four-block plan of what our milestones and goals were, and there were several things that were part of that. At this juncture, each one of the company commanders has a different set of circumstances in his battlespace. So I had him develop along our three lines of operation what he saw as the primary initiatives he thought should be undertaken relative to neutralizing the insurgency, employing/expanding the ISF, CMO, and IO [information operations]. If you've noticed, everything we do is relative to those three things. . . .

Just off the top, I would say that one of the major initiatives that's a part of this will be to increase the Iraqi security force, and I say ISF because that includes both IA [Iraqi army] and IP [Iraqi police]. We're going to increase their taking the lead by at least 25 percent. And I think that's absolutely doable in really what is the

three fully operational months that we have available before we start turning over battlespace. So that's our focus. You basically have to take a month to socialize that plan. I mean you can develop a plan, you develop it with the Iraqis, you've got to let them think about it, it's going to take two weeks, and then you're going to implement it. You're going to develop, socialize it, plan for it—that's going to take you a month. I mean, things take time. Then you're going to implement it. And then once you implement it, then what's real important to us is to basically, as always, you're assessing and revising. It's constant; it's never-ending. It's a thinking man's game. But we have to assess and revise that plan so that it's steady state, more of an enduring task for the ISF before our replacement gets here. In other words, we're not going to implement a good idea right before our replacements get here and go, "Hey, check out we did. Why don't you go ahead. We set you up for success, you can go ahead and smooth this out." We want it to be smoothed out, fully functional, kind of the expected, the norm, prior to them getting here. So that's probably the major initiative that we're undertaking.

***Wheeler:*** How do you measure that 25 percent shift to ISF lead?

***Journey:*** Well, you can measure it by the operations and the enduring tasks that are ongoing. It could be as simple as, at this particular site, for example, if you have 25 percent less Marines standing post, that's pretty measurable. If you have the Iraqi army conducting 25 percent more dismounted patrols then they were previously, that's very measurable. . . .

***Wheeler:*** The last topic that I wanted to inquire about specifically is your IO piece. What's driven that? What you're doing is fairly unique in the AO. How did you conceive that and carry it out?

***Journey:*** I think the IO piece that you're speaking to is the broadcasts approach that we're utilizing. I think we all recognize that you can be doing great things and changing the security and stability of an area, but what really matters is what people perceive, what they think. If they don't know things are improving, then it really doesn't matter what you're doing, because their behaviors are going to be driven by what they think. The question we posed to ourselves was, how do you get the word out? How do you

communicate with the populace? We simply took a look at what means were available to us, which were, you have your standard paper products, your flyers, and things of that nature. You have your standard TPT [tactical psyops team] broadcasts that go out. And our experience has been that those are not very good. So we started trying to look at other mediums that we could influence.

We have a nonkinetic effects working group here in the battalion which is headed up by the battalion XO [executive officer, Major Daniel R. Zappa]. They sort of coalesce not only the 2/3 side of the house, but an IO cell, our CMO efforts, because again, those things can achieve making the enemy less effective. So that group was tasked to basically analyze other ways in which we could do this. Amongst that meeting, we recognized, we were tasked with monitoring mosque broadcasts. Our brigade tasked us to monitor mosque broadcasts to see what messages they're putting out. And we said, holy cow, why don't we broadcast our messages? I mean, people are already conditioned, that's the way they receive information. We can do this. And so there are some systems, public announcement systems that are out there—LRAD [long-range acoustic device], TacWave—we inquired about getting some of those, but in the interim, we just went to a local contractor, went to Baghdad and bought a big PA [public address] system. Our three target audiences for that are both the Iraqi police and Iraqi army, which strengthens their resolve; obviously the population; and the insurgents.

You have to make this credible, and the way we felt we could make it credible was that these broadcasts would only come from locations in which police were actually located. We created a basic cover story, which was this is the voice of Ramadi coming from the Iraqi police. Initial broadcasts were basically to desensitize the people to hearing it. They hear the national anthem, local music, we take credible information of things they are interested in off the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] and Jazeera, and we say thank you for listening. For several weeks, we play that, and people get used to hearing it. It's coming from a police station—this seems okay.

Then soon thereafter, we start wickering in our own PsyOps [psychological operations] products, which cause reactions by the

enemy and influence the people. In addition to that, we start including the police chief, the governor, local officials to make their own announcements, which then further makes this a credible medium for transmitting information. The whole time we're doing this, it's almost like conducting marketing. We're taking focus groups, we're getting feedback, what they liked, what they didn't like, what their reactions to it were. And we're slowly modifying this to reach out and touch more people. And we expand the speakers across every fixed position where we have police, so that now we're reaching a larger audience. And the feedback we started getting was, it was well-received. They said, "This is how we used to get information." We didn't even realize that they used to do more of this, so they perceive a sense of normalcy. We now have leaders coming to us wanting to make broadcasts on this system. So now it's really just taken on a whole life of its own.

We're not really having to drive, I mean, they're saying the things that we want the word to get out about in terms of areas which are secure, areas they're having trouble with and they need the peoples' help in getting rid of folks. We're also having reactive messages, which are off the shelf. If there's a firefight, it's ongoing, that says, you need to go inside for your children's safety because the insurgents are at it again. It's always turning things back onto the insurgents. You wouldn't believe the number of incidents which occur in which the people think we did it because everything works off of word of mouth and rumor and we weren't breaking into that at all. . . .

It matters what people think, what they perceive. They just started believing their area was getting safer, even if nothing changed. Now contractors started working. Shops started opening. Schools started opening. Yeah, this area is safe now, the police are here. And I'll tell you, nothing really changed. But it changed in their mind. It developed its own momentum. It's become a key tool in driving a wedge between insurgents and the population. Again, we're all after the same target. The insurgents are after the people, and so are we. They can't exist without them and their ability to blend in with them. So we're all after the same thing.



Interview 14

***Counterinsurgency in  
Central Ramadi, Part II***

# Major Daniel R. Zappa

*Executive Officer*

*1st Battalion, 6th Marines*

*Assigned to 1st Brigade Combat Team*

*1st Armored Division, U.S. Army*

*I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)*

September 2006 to May 2007

Major Daniel R. Zappa served in Iraq as the commander of Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, in Saqliwiyah, outside Fallujah, during a tour in 2004-2005. He returned to Iraq from September 2006 to May 2007 as the battalion's executive officer. The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, was assigned to the U.S. Army's 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, in support of I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) in central Ramadi.

While Major Zappa's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel William M. Journey, concentrated on building Iraqi security forces and overseeing the battalion's kinetic efforts, Major Zappa played a key role in the battalion's engagements with Iraqi leaders and its non-kinetic efforts. His work with Sheikh Abdul Satter Abu Risha and Sattar's confederation of tribes at the outset of the Awakening laid the foundation for U.S. Army Colonel Sean B. MacFarland's engagement and support of the Awakening movement.

In this interview, Major Zappa describes taking part in meetings with local sheikhs. Although 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, under Colonel MacFarland took the lead in engagements with Sheikh Sattar, Major Zappa met frequently with other local sheikhs, including Sattar's brother, Ahmad Abu Risha.

Major Zappa was interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler on 17 February 2007 at Camp Hurricane Point, Ramadi, Iraq.

***Lieutenant Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler:*** Two of your nontraditional roles that I've heard about in my travels around the battalion are,

one, chairman of the non-kinetic effects working group, and second of all, a pretty significant role with sheikh and local leader engagement. Can you talk a little about each of those roles?

**Major Daniel R. Zappa:** I think the non-kinetic effects piece is important for counterinsurgency operations. . . . It's an operations function, but it's not going to get a lot of attention unless we put someone over the top of it, and the OpsO [operations officer] has got too much to do when it comes to kinetic operations, and managing battlespace, and assets, and things like that.

So really, what it entails is once a week I get the key personnel in the non-kinetic world together. It's all based off of how we can gain tactical advantage. How can we further our abilities or our influence in our battlespace? When you're doing counterinsurgency operations, the population is the terrain. So how [do] you identify what the people want, how [do] you address that, how do you solve problems together effectively and attack the perception that you are an occupier?

Our goal is not to solve all the problems in the world, but it's to make things a little bit better and to promote the Iraqi government and the Iraqi security forces, specifically the army and the police. The key is the police. It's been that way, we've seen that it's what the people respond to. It's the return to normalcy. If you're standing on the street corner in your home town, and three vehicles role by, United States Army or National Guard, you're going to get up in arms, and it's going to bother you. You're not going to have a very warm feeling about that. But if you see a police car drive down your street, it makes you feel secure, it makes you feel comfortable. You probably know that guy or have at least seen him before if it's a routine local policeman. So we promote that.

[When] we got here, we went from zero. We had no pending projects. We had no points of contact in the town. We had no civil-military operations tracking. If you talk to Major [Scott J.] Kish, he'll tell you how he basically started at ground zero when it came to contracts and points of contact, who was going to get things done. So we pulled him, we pulled the intel [intelligence] officer, humint [human intelligence] officer, information operations was

our Arty LnO [artillery liaison officer], the attached tactical PsyOps [psychological operations] team, public affairs, staff judge advocate, and operations officer. Those are really the primary players in this. And we just talk about the opportunities and the threats that we face in the battlefield. How are we going to address the threats to us? What are some things, outside-the-box things, that we can do to further our agenda? That's kind of the long and the short of it.

From this group, we'll cover the kinetic operations that are coming up and how can we support them with information, how can we let people know what we're doing? Because too often we'd see destruction in town that the insurgents could turn around and pin on us, regardless of if we caused it or not. An IED [improvised explosive device] destroys a vehicle and causes civilian casualties, it's easy for the enemy who is on the site there and speaks the language, is part of the culture, can turn that on us and say, "Well, the Americans blew up that. They blew that up. That wasn't something we did. They plant the bombs on the streets." And in this world, in the Arab world, in the Middle East, and here in Iraq, it's the rumor in the street, it's what everyone listens to. The word on the street gets out quickly. Our biggest challenge was how we addressed that, how we fight that. What do we have in our arsenal that we can put against that? One is to co-opt the locals and pass the word through them. We don't have an effective telephone or Internet or television station capability here, so we had to go back to 100 years ago, 150 years ago in technology and just ask what could we do to increase the word of mouth, the good news.

We've got ECP's [entry control points] that we control. We can pass the word through the Iraqi police and the Iraqi army at the ECP's. Technologically, we've got the LRADs [long-range acoustic device] that we can use and we can post information. Captain [Sean P.] Dynan, the H&S [headquarters and support] company commander, had the idea of putting big white boards at the ECPs where the Iraqi security forces can write information as it occurs up on white boards, to impact people as they drive and walk through the city. They're going to see that, and that's going to get information to them quickly.

The other thing we're attacking is perception. I mean perception of this being the most violent city in Iraq, the provincial capital is controlled by insurgents. I'm sure everyone has read about that. We did before we got here. In March and April when we were reading blogs about this place, we thought what are we getting ourselves into? They're pinned down there, and you can't do anything. Then you get here, and you realize a lot of that has to do with perceptions . . . enemy perceptions, friendly perceptions—people's perceptions. And that's what we're battling here.

So we try to manage our own information flow. How do we talk about Ramadi? How do we . . . this goes right down to the articles your PAO [public affairs officer] Marine, your corporal is writing about 1/6 in Ramadi. He doesn't write about, you won't see, the articles on the sniper engagements—even if we win the sniper engagement, even if we kill five guys with snipers—you won't see articles about 1/6 like that. You'll see articles about we met with the mayor, or we're engaging the sheikhs, or personality sketches on Lance Corporal Smith from Arkansas. You're not going to see a lot of kinetic stories coming out of here, and that's for a reason, because we're managing perceptions. I think that's pulling the curtain back a little bit on what we do. Some people might say public affairs is not information operations, but I take the other side. And I think there are a lot of people that would agree. You spend a little bit of time here and you see how important that is to shaping people's perceptions.

**Wheeler:** What was behind the battalion's thought process with regard to the speaker broadcasts? Where did that come from, when did you start doing it, what are the effects you've seen from that?

**Zappa:** Well, it was something we developed during our skull sessions in September, October, November [2006]. We really couldn't get past how do we beat the word in the street, about what's going on, how do we get information to people? And we had certain things in our arsenal, that the military provides, the loudspeaker systems, the LRADs. But we talked about it at the table. I don't know whose idea it was specifically; I know Major [Tiley R.] Nunnink pretty much picked it up and lent a lot of time

and energy to shaping what the actual procedure to producing it. But it was pretty much a team effort. . . . When we were banging our heads on the table with how do we do this, I don't know if it was me or if it was somebody else who said, "Why don't we just buy the same speaker systems that they use on the mosques?" Buy the same PA [public address] systems that they use and put those up on the stations that we own, on the fixed sites that we own. And so we did. And people take to it very kindly.

The implementation and the way that it has been used to not only provide information but to effect the enemy's OODA [observe, orient, decide, act] loop by, he's now looking over his shoulder because when we put in the broadcast [things like] "thank you for your continued support of Iraqi security forces," "thank you for using the tips line," "thank you for reporting information on insurgents." The insurgent is now looking over his shoulder saying, who's reporting on me? Who's doing this? And we can tell we're having an effect with it. And by the same token, you're impacting the friendly audience and your neutral audience, conditioning them to be familiar with hearing it, they hear the Iraqi national anthem, they hear familiar voices, they hear things that people have to say to them. It's about this place getting better, the mayor, and sheikhs, and governor, and police chiefs—people who are on their side—and it gives them a little bit more faith, hopefully, in their government and in their security forces, which is all we're trying to effect.

***Wheeler:*** The other piece that is very encouraging here is just seeing the central role which civil affairs and CMO [civil-military operations] play in your battalion's overall strategy. Where has that come from?

***Zappa:*** It comes from the boss. He makes it a priority. He outlines [that] we're going to do three things: we're going to neutralize anti-Iraqi elements, we're going to train and partner with Iraqi police and Iraqi army. And when I say train, I don't mean little academies where you're teaching them to point their weapons in the right direction, they already know how to do that. I'm talking about partnership—living with them, operating with them, getting them operational. And the third thing would be to pick up and support

any civil-military operations, any civil operations that contribute to that return to normalcy or that construction or that impression that things are going forward and getting better. Those three things, they come straight from the boss, and that's from his vision as part of where he wants to operate. And those three lines of operation have worked, I think, for us in a good way. It also tempers a lot of things that Marines are trained to do that you can't just do wantonly in this town. You can't just be all about kinetics and killing and shooting people and talking about it, which is what we, as a culture, value.

So when you make a priority out of civil-military operations, you made that a priority, you're conditioning your Marines, too, to avoid incidents that will hurt you more, and hurt you strategically. You're now sharpening the edges and taking some of the rough spots out of potential serious liabilities that impact far beyond our own AO [area of operation]. He's got a friendly audience as well, you've got several audiences he's working on, and that's one of them. I think that's part of the reason why we've been so successful. It's not just blanket leadership that keeps people from doing that, from doing bad things, or stepping outside the lines. You have to make them aware how important it is to have that right mentality, that mindset that you're not in al-Fajr here, that we're not conducting the Fallujah assault. Although there are times when we are, and it goes full kinetic. And that's been evident by the statistics. We did our operations in December, in January we're like in a mini al-Fajr in the middle of the city with the number of caches found, with the number of contacts, the amount of attacks, our success, the numbers of enemy killed and captured. You can look at those and say, on a microcosm, that's pretty tense. And it still is intense. That's the long answer.

**Wheeler:** Many battalions have spoken, during my interviews with them, about their frustrations with the "catch and release" program, and [your commander] credited a lot of your lack of frustration with that with the fact that you've just plain old killed a lot of the bad guys and the detention piece hasn't been as big.

**Zappa:** I think HVI [high value individual] pursuit, I don't personally, from where I sit, I don't see the results as well as some

other people do, or I don't lend a lot to that. I think, especially these days, you need to empower the local population, you need to empower the policemen to take out and capture the bad guys. They know them a hell of a lot better than any of the task forces that we have do. I'm sorry to say that, but you aren't going to kill or capture every bad guy and flip this thing on its head. But you can help the Iraqi people and help the Iraqi security forces by going after maybe the key individuals or leaders, or flushing them out of the AO. Just by putting their picture up, you're impacting them. Putting them on the loudspeaker, "we're after you," is just as effective as killing them or capturing them. That's why I don't think we stress too much about that. That's my own personal feeling. You can't kill enough bad guys. I mean, we killed the number-one bad guy over here, and what happened? Nothing. It got worse. You aren't going to chop the head off the snake. He's just going to sprout a new head, or maybe a couple. So that's not the way you win here. And I think that's evident in the way we do business here.

***Wheeler:*** Is there anything else that I haven't asked you about that you think may be important to get on the record about your role here, about 1/6's approach to this battlespace, about 1/6's experience?

***Zappa:*** I think we have great relationships with our higher headquarters. We're here with 1/1 AD [1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, USA] and I MEF [I Marine Expeditionary Force]. We have a lot of assets and the ability to bring things to bear materially that the Iraqi people don't, the [Iraqi] leadership doesn't. They can't get fuel, they can't get certain food items, so we go and get it for them. . . . Because of our relationship with the sheikhs, and more importantly, with the mayor—even though he is a brigade-partnered key leader, he falls in our sphere because he works in our AO—we own the center of the city. We can identify, we can partner with him most effectively and most frequently, and I think because of that, we can identify needs and operate quicker. You know, if you're at the brigade level, you might not check in with the mayor every day. You may check in with the mayor once a week, maybe check in with him a couple times a week. We have the ability to do that every day, and we pretty much do.

**Wheeler:** You mentioned the key local leaders. How is it that you've become one of the key people, interacting with local leaders?

**Zappa:** It was an accident, really. The first time this happened, the JCC [Joint Coordination Center (between Iraqi army and police and Coalition forces)] is in town. There was a meeting that was allegedly going on between some tribal leaders at the JCC. The CO [commanding officer] didn't want to become involved with the tribal leaders himself, he's more along the lines of the legitimate government, you know, governor, mayor—[that is] if there is one, because this was before we had a mayor. So he sent me to link up with them. It ended up being at the Sheikh [Abdul] Sattar [Abu Risha] compound, where he and his brother live, which is not in our AO, it's on the other side of Camp Ramadi. And we ended up going there to this meeting, and we were the only Coalition forces there. There were dozens and dozens of sheikhs and important people in it. I'd been here before, and this is the most impressive group of men I've ever seen gathered in one spot. Very businesslike, there wasn't a lot of smoking cigarettes and glad-handing; it was all business.

They were frustrated. They had organized, and they had decided that they were going to fight al-Qaeda, and they just needed someone to start telling them that they were going to be listened to and they were going to be supported. Major Kish and I were there, [and I was] just kind of like, okay, sounds good to me, I like it. Maybe you're not talking to the right people. And brigade ended partnering more with that. But we recognized that as a spot where we could go and we really set it up with Sheikh Sattar's brother, Sheikh Ahmad [Bezia Fteikhan al-Rishawi]. We said, hey, we like talking with you guys, and we think we can do business. He said, every Monday, come back. So we did. That was in early November, and we basically go there every Monday or so. Even if we don't have a lot of business, they get used to seeing us there.

One of the things it yielded is there is a multi-million-dollar rubble removal contract in the middle of the city of Ramadi. In front of the government center, down on Michigan, they demolished a bunch of buildings that were providing the enemy with cover and concealment to attack the government center. To deny it, they

knocked all those buildings down, and there was a contract to remove all that rubble. It was in our AO, so the MEF asked us to supervise it. Well, the contractor never did anything. So we recognized that the sheikhs—Sheikh Sattar, Sheikh Ahmad—had a contracting business, and we said, hey, we might be able to get you a piece of this, and eventually, long story short, they got the whole contract. It's a difficult place to work. You're working in a former impact area, in front of the government center. But these guys have worked slow and steady and really made a dent in it down there. So that is something that we think is a small victory.

We also, we've asked them for interpreter support because we, everyone across the AO, it's difficult to find good interpreters. Based on my relationship with a guy, with an engineer who works with them, . . . he brought a guy to meet me, this former teacher, he's out of work, he lives in Fallujah, he's one of our interpreters now. . . . Because he's local and we want to protect his identity, we put him in a place where he's working just with Marines and Iraqi army. But he's making money now, because Titan [defense contractor] is paying him, and he's freed us up to continue to work with the Iraqi army and . . . with Marines there. Now we don't need an interpreter dedicated to that spot, so everybody wins. I just view this as another way to strengthen the ties with these people. It's little things like that that kept us going back.

We've also partnered with them. Through them is how we got very close with Sheikh Raad [Sabah al-Alwani], who is the leader of the Abu Awan tribe, who lives in our battlespace and really has done a lot of good work. Contract-wise, he finds people who will get work done, not just people who will sign the contract, take the money and run, but people who will actually do the work, [like] remove burned-out vehicles from the city, which is another small cosmetic thing which increases the appearance and takes away some of the everyday IO [information operation] reminders. If you've got burned-out vehicles from VBIEDs [vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices] lying all over the city, that's a loss on IO because it's a reminder every time people walk by or drive by [of] who's running the town. We contracted through [Sheikh Raad] to get all those removed and clean things up around here.

Plus it's a security issue, you get those things cleaned up, there's not going to be something concealed in them. So he's turned out to be a very important, very valuable leader. And really he has done a good job, he's been very courageous in the fact that he's assumed that sheikh leadership. He's not really the senior man in that tribe, [but] the guy who was too afraid to lead the tribe anymore, so he's basically ceded it over to Sheikh Raad, who's done a good job.

**Wheeler:** Is there anything else I haven't asked you about that you think would be important to get on the record here about your experiences, about 1/6's experiences?

**Zappa:** Be persistent. Don't rest. You're only as good as your next visit. Your relationships need to be maintained. They can't just be left to rot. People expect to see you frequently. Learn a little bit of Arabic. Learn some things beyond hello. Learn to say a couple things that they will recognize, and it will go a long way. Personal relationships are really important with working with them.

But don't forget the big picture. When it comes to dealing with the tribes, you can't sell yourself all the way on them. You have to remember that there's an elected government, there's a legitimate government, and however the two sides may fight over joint forces, you, at the end of the day, need to remember that you're on the side of Iraqi government, so they may or may not be as effective at leading the people. But the tribes have to be subordinate to the governor and the mayor.





**2007**  
***The Awakening Turns the Tide***





Interview 15

*Turning the Tide, Part I*

GASKIN

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## **Major General Walter E. Gaskin Sr.**

*Commanding General  
II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)  
Multi National Force • West*

February 2007 to February 2008

Major General Walter E. Gaskin Sr. took command of the II Marine Expeditionary Force in June 2006 and deployed to al-Anbar Province in February 2007. This interview, conducted near the end of the tour, details the progress during that period and is a follow-on to one conducted with the general the previous year. Major General Gaskin describes continuing operations and the success of taking back population centers from al-Qaeda, economic governance development efforts, the drop in kinetic action and transition to counterinsurgency, and helicopter governance.

Major General Gaskin was interviewed by Colonel Michael D. Visconage on 11 January 2008 at Camp Fallujah, Iraq.

**Colonel Michael D. Visconage:** If you look at that period from late June [2007], when we spoke last, and today, how would you characterize what you have seen as the key operations initiatives, evolution of the fight out here in west?

**Major General Walter E. Gaskin Sr.:** I think what you'll see is a continuation of what we discovered from right at the beginning of March through June, and that was the taking back of the population centers from al-Qaeda, pushing them out into the hinterland north of the Euphrates River, east of Lake Tharthar, and south and down into the wadis, and into the areas toward the route and the MEF's [Marine expeditionary force] security area. We believed then that we had—as we are seeing now—we had to have a single focus of both our kinetic effect toward removing al-Qaeda, but followed very closely, we had to have economic development, a sense of development of governance, and the building of capacity of the Iraqi security forces.

So the first thing that kind of grabbed this thing, we were right at the beginning of our contribution from the “surge.” What really grabbed us is that as we were able to take the population centers back. The incidents, whether it be IEDs [improvised explosive devices], small-arms fire, indirect fire, dropped precipitously, so the enemy realized that we were really onto something. But it was not like we had done before, because we had fought in al-Qaim, we had fought in Fallujah, we had fought in Ramadi. But this time, what we did differently is we backfilled, so there was a persistent presence with the Iraqi police.

When I got over here, the year 2006 was the year of police, but I would now characterize 2007 as the actions of the police, because they brought to the table familiarity with their communities, loyalty from their community, respect from their communities, being one of them. Their agreement to provide a rule of law made them a very viable force for eliminating what we discovered was the TTPs [tactics, techniques, and procedures] of al-Qaeda, and that is stifling, intimidating, and murdering the folks within the cities. This is a classic COIN [counterinsurgency] operation, separating the enemy from the people.

We made the people the center of gravity, and there, when we saw these [things] happening, the discovery was, as we got into the city, not only did we gate up the city by dividing it into precincts or districts within the city and establishing a joint security station that had Iraqi police in charge, in number, but also engaging the populace in the support, engaging the mukhtars, who was the civic leader for that community and also bringing in Coalition forces, along with Iraqi forces together as a team in that. But clearing that out, al-Qaeda out, putting in those security forces and immediately bringing some relief to the people.

When there was humanitarian aid, or some claims to fix things that were broken during the actual fighting, . . . we started having the civic government looking at bringing the services back to the folks. Immediately, once they got some security, they wanted these services: electricity, water, sewage, trash, rubble removal. All of those items were very meaningful to them. Rubble removal meant

clearing away places for their kids to return to school. It also meant day labor for hiring those young folks who were kind of thrown out and caught in the middle of fighting or because the state-owned enterprises were closed. There were no places to work. So not only this hiring of these Iraqi police meant meaningful work for somebody in the community, it also meant that for us, stability and security so other people can work. They can open up their shops, and they could participate in the day labor program that was pushed throughout the community.

We saw this moving throughout the major population centers, whether you're talking about Ramadi, Hit, Baghdadi, al-Qaim, Rutba, or Fallujah. It's the same process that was working, so we watched the Iraqi police grow from about 11,000 up to its current state of 24,000. We also knew that we had to train those Iraqi police, professionalize them, and make sure that they were working within the rule of law. But, instantly, we discovered that because the people believed in those indigenous personnel working in the cities, the tips came in. So we created our own HumInt [human intelligence] pool that actually provided information to us about those who shouldn't be there, and those who were passing through that were foreign fighters, because they have a different accent or facial structure. They knew all of that, we were glad to see.

Discovery of cache finds went up exponentially, and we got through, like I said, the incidents just dropped down, so the cities became instantly calm places to live, and you saw the bustling marketplace. I think that we were onto something. We discovered how al-Qaeda operated, and they operate near a mosque. That's where they did their recruiting. They had some type of chop shop or place to make IEDs, whether that be vehicles or just the kind that they buried or shoved out in the road, those pressure plates. They had a safe haven where they could actually hang out and have meetings. We discovered that they were very closely located, and they used that to intimidate the police and the leadership in the community. Once we found that out, we would even engage the imams, as far as their leadership and helping to rebuild a mosque. We would not go into mosques. The Iraqis go into mosques. They appreciate the respect for their culture and their religion that we brought with this.

**Visconage:** Since we spoke in June, what has been the continued growth of governance and economic pieces?

**Gaskin:** I think it's tremendous. As a matter of fact, probably one of the best things we did in the organization was having the deputy oversight over the economic development portion and the tribal engagement, so the governance, economic development, in addition to those members of the G-5, and as well as the CAG, civil affairs group. All of that came with oversight. . . . From the staff perspective, [this engagement gave us] the ability to understand what was happening and how the Iraqis felt at being disenfranchised and separated from their federal government, and even most of those separated from their provincial government because of a boycott of an election in 2005.

So it ended up fairly consistent, and most of them are now experiencing new principles of democracy that they had never had before. They were very, very used to it just being pushed down to them—this is what you get, this is all you get, shut up and be happy. And now, in order for them to get anything, they had to find the means to pull it out of a government, a government that they didn't really trust, because it was now run by Shi'a—Shi'a from a political sense, and influenced by Iran—so they figured that the government failed them.

We started at the grassroots level; there were some sparkles of hope out there. We had a Governor Mamoun [Sami Rashid al-Alwani] all those years from IIP, Islamic Iraqi Party. He was still a very brave person, and he never gave up the governorship. His life was [nearly taken] 35 times, but he came to work every day, and on the vehicle, got put on a vehicle, but he believed that that was the seat of government, and that if he ever left that, he would leave the government. The provincial council was meeting in Baghdad, and there was no city governance at all. They were of course in the hiding because of the murder and intimidation campaign that al-Qaeda took against anybody expected to be leadership, other than the implanted emirs that they put up.

So once we were able to remove al-Qaeda from the cities, each one of these cities started setting up their own government. They

appointed a mayor, they had a city council. They were explained the rules that city councilship means, that each one on the city council is subdivided into sections, the sections have technicals, and there are so many technicals, meaning a professional person. You have so many seats for sheikhs, and you have so many seats for the party membership or political membership. But what you are beginning to see is representative membership.

Once we started getting those formed up, we then can explain to them [that] in order for you to get money from the governor, you've got to prioritize projects, and that includes some of the rebuilding, the electrical power, the fuel, all these services that you want. You have to also understand that your government, very, very stovepiped as it goes from the director generals of each level right up to the central government under the ministries, and that you have a governor, and we have a mayor, and you have that line.

So we found that it took time to train them on how to plan city planning, how to run a city, and how to develop a budget, because they've never had a budget before. We did some classes up in Irbil, where we got the leadership sitting down and doing "Governors 101." We did it in Jordan. We had the leadership come together and say this is how you plan a budget. Here's your budget that you had that we can't really have any transparency of in the 2006 budget, but here's what we know we have in 2007, and this is how you've got to administer, how you expend that, and the cost of that expenditure. They were able to go back and petition the prime minister for a supplemental, and they were the first one to get a supplemental budget of \$70 million because we could show how we were expending the \$107 million that was given, so that [helped].

Then we had a thing called helicopter governance, and that's where the DCG [deputy commanding general], General [John R.] Allen, was absolutely phenomenal. He was able to put the governor on a helicopter, along with the precinct chair, the provincial police, some of the DGs [director generals], and some of the members of provincial council, and they would go out and see the constituents around Anbar. In Anbar, we talk about the tyranny of distance. When you're talking about an area the size of North Carolina or

New York, it's an all-day drive to go there. When we put them on a helicopter, and they could actually fly into these municipalities and actually do what they are supposed to by their rules—in other words, when the provincial chairman goes in, he validates that city council. You can tell them, “Yes, you’ve got so many of those representatives on here. Yes, you’ve got that, and, okay, what projects have been council-approved?” The governor meets with the mayor and accepts the mayor’s papers: “Yes, you’ve gone through the proper vetting, and you have been nominated by your provincial council. I now say that you are the mayor, and, oh, by the way, I’m Governor Mamoun,” because some of them had never seen him before. They’d heard about him. He’s over there in Ramadi. And you’ve got the provincial chairman.

We discovered that, by their own method, Anbar is divided up into 10 police districts. We were trying to divide them up, but then we said, “Wait, they know what the districts are. Let’s just send over the districts.” And it turned out they’ve got 10 districts. The district of al-Qaim includes [Ubaiti], Husaybah, all that. Haditha has a triad, like we thought, but we found with Hit, it had Baghdadi and Husaybah. . . . He goes out and he meets with the police, district police, and talks about hiring orders, training, criminal enterprise, and those things that you would expect the chief of police to do, and responds to the provincial chief of police. And they would do this, and, of course, the government will then take their petitions of what they need to bring it back and prioritize for the province based on funds that he has available. He had \$107 million, and he looked at all the things people needed, and it exceeded the capacity that he had, so that’s what drove him to do that. But [in] the major cities around Anbar is where he did helicopter governance.

The other part that governance is, is that this whole country, this whole area, is tribal, and if you understand how important and how fundamental the tribal society [is], and the influence and the position of the sheikhs, then you begin to understand how everything works. They will tell you that they were tribal before they were Muslims, and they will always be tribal. You can ignore that fact if you want to, but it’s to your own peril. They will also tell you that nothing happens unless the sheikhs agree to it, and they’ll

tell you, too, that the sheikhs are the ones that say fight, and the sheikhs are the ones that will say don't fight. The sheikhs are the ones who said don't participate in the election. So understanding why they do what they do, and who the power brokers are, as far as the sheikhs and their influence, and seeing how the sheikhs are grouped together.

We were very fortunate that the sheikhs happened to be, just like we had our areas of operation grouped together, so we had the Fallujah sheikhs, the Ramadi sheikhs, and everybody to the west, the western sheikhs, and, frankly, that's what they called themselves, too: the western sheikhs. And then we'd have a number of sheikhs who were expatriates. They were living in Jordan or Syria. Five of them have come back. Five of the major sheikhs have come back, five out of eight. But there's a real misunderstanding if you believe that these sheikhs left and deserted their people. It was all the other way around, with people who sent their sheikhs off. Sheikhs are so important in this society that when they are killed, as al-Qaeda had done to sheikhs, it was devastating. It was like losing the patriarch. You just lost the head of your existence. You actually lost your connection up through the tribal ones through Mohammed, or through Moses. I mean, these guys trace their history all the way to Adam and Eve, and they can tell you, one sheikh talked to me 21 grandfathers ago. So when you lost these sheikhs, who were the keepers, who were the protectors, who provided for them, they said, "No, we can't handle that," so they sent them out of the country.

They'd never lost influence; they were always sending word to whoever they designated to handle it while they were gone. So being able to engage with those sheikhs, and talk about the future of Anbar from a position where, it's that you've got to realize that the Shi'as are in charge—get over it. Get over the fact that the Shi'as are in charge, and connect what that government is going to be with security [people]. So our thing that we want to do with the engagement with the sheikhs is use them in the connecting and the reconciliation that has to occur between the government and the province. That's what we did, and I think that was the major movement that connected together. The sheikhs approved the

leadership. The leadership used the sheikhs' council, as they have always through history. I mean, right out in the government sector, for example, there is a sheikhs' room, because of how the sheikhs meet, and they remind you that [Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Kamil Mohammed Hassan al-] Maliki, or any of the leadership in Baghdad, belongs to a tribe. They understand. . . .

They understand exactly what we're saying, and they'll play this political game, but they understand the influence, and we will not be ignored. The sheikhs believe that they are the foundations of reconciliation that will occur out here. But there will be ways to do this to forge genuine relationships with the sheikhs. So I talk about Sheikh [Hamid], and when I talk about Sheikh [Hatoum], or Sheikh Ahmad, or Sheikh [Kheba], I'm talking about guys I know. We sit down and eat goat together and talk about the issues of the day. It's not someone who I just send a note to, who actually [generally] understands.

The two things that I think have brought about our relationship with the sheikhs that are very, very important, [are] trust and respect. If you trust me, then when we talk, we can talk very candidly. I can tell you when I fought you, why I fought you, and why I won't fight you again, and why I hate al-Qaeda and I'm not ever going to turn again on you because you helped me kill al-Qaeda, and I have a blood feud with al-Qaeda, and it takes six generations to eliminate a blood feud, so it's permanent. The other thing is respect. I am not somebody running around the fire with a loincloth on. I am a man. I am a very educated man—and a lot of them are. I have a sensing of my country, I have a history, and a respect for my history and meaning means a lot. So I don't expect you to talk down to me, at me, or by me. So when you get that, it's like you aren't the only one with good ideas. You may be in a better position to use your ideas, but I have good ideas as well. And that professional interchange, built on trust and respect, allowed us to get further along, and I'm convinced faster than we ever dreamed possible for creating stability and peace out here.

They prefer to call us brothers rather than friends, and I used to ask, "okay, are we a friend? Do you call us friendly forces?" Friendly

forces are colleagues, but a brother is family. So with friends you can get mad with and lose. Brothers, you can get angry with your brothers, but that passes because you are bound by blood. So that's the relationship that we sought, and that's what we had in the makings. That relationship has been started a long time. It wasn't just II MEF Forward coming out here, but the relationship had been started. These Marines out here, there's something about these Marines, and their ability to see that we were sincere in it, whether we were out in al-Qaim or in Fallujah.

So when they hear us talking about leaving, they're concerned, and I have got several examples of what they think about leaving. One, I was talking to the mayor of Haditha. He says, "Are you leaving?" I said, "Well, eventually." He said, "No, are you leaving? Because the last time you left us to go fight in Fallujah, they lined us up in the soccer field and shot some of the leadership of the city. So we just need to know if you're going to be here with us until we can get up on our feet and be able to defend ourselves." And I have promised him that we would be here, and we're still here, and we have built the capacity of their police. But as [one sheikh] says about leaving, you can't take the cake out of the oven before it is done just because it smells good. He believes that. He was talking about us moving out of the city. He was talking about the IPs [Iraqi police]. He said, "These IPs are training. They're going to be very good one day, but what the Coalition forces do for them is give them professional training and allow them to be able to do what they're put there for. That is security, and that's a lot to them."

**Visconage:** What do they say when you talk to the tribal leaders or the governor? What is their metric for knowing when it will be time for us to leave?

**Gaskin:** The first thing we have to learn is, talking about culturally, an awareness of what they need and how they go about making decisions. . . . They come to the meeting for the formal part of the discussion and probably eat. So if you go in there thinking that you're going to get a decision, you'll get a lot of talk, a lot of back and forth, and if you witness it, you will see a lot of arguing back and forth. But they're only talking about the issues that they didn't

get to discuss before they got to the meeting, because it's already decided. [Decisions that were made ahead of time.]

So they have already decided that we are their guests, and like guests, we have to stay forever. You're here for a different purpose, and so they wanted us to very candidly and openly state what our purpose was, because they remind us that there is no land in Iraq that doesn't belong to the sheikhs. You can't buy it. You can't come out and build a house on it. There's only a few ways to get land. It is hereditary. You get it through the government taking that Saddam [Hussein] used to do, or you get it through conquering.

Well, [they want to know], "what are you doing?" When they hear that term "occupation," their connotation of occupation is in the conquer mode. "You're here to take my land. But if you help me get rid of those who mean me harm, then you're obviously my friend, and if you fight along with me and shed your blood, you're my brother." So they think that we're going to leave eventually, but they didn't want us to get caught up in the political implications of leaving that they hear, and they're very astute as far as that part. They didn't want us to leave until they were able to stand up on their own independently.





Interview 16

*Turning the Tide, Part II*

## Major General John R. Allen

*Deputy Commanding General  
II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)  
Multi National Force • West*

January 2007 to February 2008

Major General John R. Allen was responsible for governance in al-Anbar Province for Multi National Force-West and II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) under Major General Walter E. Gaskin Sr. Since his return to the U.S., he was promoted to lieutenant general and became the deputy commanding general for U.S. Central Command. In this interview, Allen, provides a concise description of his tour while providing additional insight from the vantage of his position at Central Command.

Lieutenant General Allen was interviewed via telephone by Chief Warrant Officer-4 Timothy S. McWilliams on 23 April 2009 at Central Command, Tampa, Florida.

**Chief Warrant Officer-4 Timothy S. McWilliams:** In a series of recent interviews with Iraqis, former Iraqi ambassador Sa'doon al-Zubaydi described meetings between Iraqis and Marines in Bahrain and Jordan in 2004 and suggested that there was an opportunity that could have prevented two years of conflict. Could you address that statement?

**Lieutenant General John R. Allen:** Sure. Let me comment on that first. I need to qualify what I'm going to say as not attempting to disparage the person who made that comment, or to disparage Arabs. But I need to make this comment. First of all, before I left Anbar, the provincial council made me an honorary Anbari, so I really do consider myself somebody who has an affinity for the tribes and Arabs. However, people who want to aggrandize their positions, to ensure that they get credit—within the tribal system, it's all about power and never giving up power—will make statements like “had someone listened to me in 2004,” or “if I had been listened to when we did talk in 2004, I'd have saved you two

years of war.” I’ve been down that road a thousand times with people who never were called upon to deliver on the things they say they could have. Consequently, they live in the world of the possible.

I’m sure there were conversations that occurred in 2004. The difference between 2004 and 2006 and then 2007 was really on the battlefield and security. In many respects, we, the U.S. [United States]—not we, the Marines—had created a perfect storm in Anbar. We had dismantled the military, and Anbaris in large numbers were the security forces. There’s a great martial tradition among those tribes, to be in the army. We had de-Ba’athified the government, so everybody who was a member of the Ba’ath Party, and it required you to be a member to have any real status in that society, and when I say status, I mean be a director general within the province, representing the ministries from Baghdad. So a director general of electricity would be the chief guy for electricity in this socialized system in the province. And if you were a Ba’athist, you were out of a job [after de-Ba’athification].

Now, not only were you out of a job, but the guy who runs electricity is now no longer a player inside the province. I mean, you’ve got all kinds of problems. And then the third thing we did is we closed down all state-owned enterprises. So a lot of people were looking for anything they could do to put a little food on the table and make a little money. And so an awful lot of folks entered the business of fighting United States Marines and soldiers, and in 2004, it was starting to get bad; 2005, it got worse; 2006, we killed about 1,700, almost 1,800 al-Qaeda, put another 4,500 of them in Bucca and places like that, and the violence levels doubled. So we were really in a very serious security situation, where you can have all the discussions you want in Jordan, and they’re not going to play out in a meaningful way in the battlespace. So, when folks make those kinds of comments, I am always a little skeptical, because if it were a perfect world, then we wouldn’t have gone to war there to begin with.

**McWilliams:** Can you describe the engagement and reconciliation efforts prior to your tenure?

*Allen:* I absolutely will. We had a lot of success in '07. In fact, I think it created the conditions, ultimately, for the complete turning of the province, which General [David H.] Petraeus [USA] has said “what began in Anbar spread throughout Iraq” [in a letter to the troops, 28 December 2007]. So people who were there in '07 should be very, very proud of what they've done, but I want to say this up front, and I want it to be very clear, that the MEF [I Marine Expeditionary Force] that was there before us, and all the MEFs did a great job. But the MEF that was there before us, I MEF, led by General [Richard C.] Rick Zilmer and [Robert B.] Bob Neller and [David G.] Dave Reist, the work that they did—I'm absolutely convinced of it now that a couple of years have passed—the work that they did during the darkest hour of the violence in the Anbar Province, which was in the latter part of '06 and into the first three months of our tour, they set the stage for our success. I absolutely believe it, from the engagement that they did.

For example, the young Army colonel who commanded the brigade in Ramadi, a kid by the name Sean [B.] MacFarland, who has since been selected to general, he took a chance on a coalition of sheikhs and tribes, small tribes, around the northwest of Ramadi, and that chance paid off in very, very important ways. The history is starting to shape up that the MEF didn't support him. That's not true at all. General Zilmer was very supportive. In fact, General Zilmer, on a number of occasions, with General Reist and Colonel MacFarland, sat down at the table with the sheikhs and the provincial government and refereed the sharing of power and the balance of civil governance with tribal activity. So I MEF, from roughly the summer of '06 until our handoff in February of '07, I think that of all of the occasions where reconciliation was initiated and paid off. It was under General Zilmer and Dave Reist and Bob Neller's general officer leadership where the seeds were planted, the shaping occurred that ultimately permitted us in '07 to cash in on that. In essence, they did the blocking, they opened the hole in the line and we ran the ball down the field. That's how I view it, and that's how I want history to understand it. Those guys had a hell of a kinetic battle. At the same time, they were putting steel on target in terms of real, valuable, long-term reconciliation, and we capitalized on it.

**McWilliams:** Could you describe your engagement in reconciliation efforts in 2007?

**Allen:** When we got there, we were already talking to the tribes. What happened, though, was the tribes really had not made final decisions with respect to aligning themselves with the Coalition. There were isolated large tribal areas that had made the decision they were going to come with us, but there were other substantial segments of the tribes that were on the fence. As in any counterinsurgency—this is not my term, it's a term of the art—"the peasant waits to see what the government can do or will do about the insurgents before the peasant will come off the fence." At the time we got there, there were still a lot of folks on the fence because it was uncertain that the provincial government and the government in Baghdad would ever be able to build sufficient power. . . .

It was not certain in their minds that this government would ever have enough power to really be a factor for the good in their lives. And as long as al-Qaeda was a nightmare in their lives every day if they appeared to be aligned with the government, then they were on the fence. So what we did was to do two things. We empowered the sheikhs, because there really wasn't a government functioning. It was the governor in his government center. He was basically a government of one in a building protected by a Marine rifle company. And we did all we could to empower the sheikhs in the short term, to give them back the power that had been taken from them by al-Qaeda, and we did that both in terms of a kinetic alliance against al-Qaeda, but also supported the sheikhs in affecting projects in their tribal areas to the good of the people, turning on water treatment facilities again, reconnecting the electricity, paving the roads that had been blasted by years, now, of IEDs [improvised explosive devices], repairing bridges, helping merchants to get their shops open again. All of it we funneled through the sheikhs, and all of it in the end empowered the sheikhs again, when al-Qaeda had done everything it could to marginalize the traditional tribal leadership. So that was our first step to get governance going again in the province. Thereafter, we worked very hard at the provincial and district levels to get those governments functioning and in alliance with the tribes, which is always a bit of tension in a tribal society.

But ensuring that the two of them knew that we weren't going to favor the one over the other—we weren't going to favor the tribes over the civil government, but the civil government couldn't function unless they incorporated the tribes. We worked that very, very hard, and we began to see, we had a lot of kinetic fighting. In fact, the highest violence levels of the entire war in Anbar were during the first three months that we were there. We began to see this drop off significantly when the third factor started to play on the battlefield, and the third factor was—first factor being the tribes, second factor being the civil governance—the third factor was Iraqi security forces. We were training and employing and getting them out to the field, and partnering with them as much as we possibly could. And when we cleared Ramadi in April, roughly, of '07 and made it—while it was heavily supported by Marines and soldiers—made it appear to be a police action, that was what really began the turning. And once Ramadi began to quiet down, we then turned our attention to Fallujah and did the same thing in Fallujah in the summer, which was to make it a police action.

We moved the Iraqi army out of the cities so that the cities didn't appear to be occupied cities by the Iraqi army, and [we] continued to build and empower the police force. And we went from about 3,500 police that we could find on any given day when we got there, and I got there in mid-January of '07, to about 29,000 police, all totaled, when we left, and they were pretty well trained, on the whole. So the three legs, if you will, of the reconciliation, we worked them concurrently, because we knew we had to. We were not stumbling around, figuring this out. We knew what we needed to do, so we empowered the sheikhs, we connected them to the civil leadership, and we supported them with indigenous Iraqi security forces, and then we provided the security top cover through constant conventional and special operations throughout the width and breadth and depth of the province.

**McWilliams:** From your perspective now at CentCom, have you had an opportunity to see how engagement and reconciliation efforts have continued since you left?

**Allen:** Well, I think that the successive MEFs, and we're now in the second MEF since I've been there. I MEF has gone back and

returned and now II MEF is on the ground. I think that they have been clearly just as dedicated to engagement and reconciliation as we were, but the problem set simply just evolves and changes so that points of emphasis and objectives and outcomes change. I can't speak for how it's going right now, although in fact I do stay in touch with a number of the sheikhs. They surprisingly have e-mail, and they find somebody passing by that can write English, and every now and then I'll get an English language e-mail from these guys. The current MEF that's in there is getting very high grades for maintaining this close relationship to the tribes, and to some extent the brilliance of the Marine Corps approach with Anbar really deserves a lot of credit in the history, and that is, General Petraeus is trying to do it right now in Afghanistan.

You send the same units back over and over again and, guess, what? They know the ground, they know the people, and they know the enemy, and the people know us. Not long ago I was in Afghanistan, meeting with national legislators, and the national legislators from the Helmand Province had gotten wind that American troops were coming, and they said, "Please send the Marines to the Helmand Province, because when they were here before, we had a decent quality of life and the Taliban were not factors." They call it the darkness. The Taliban were not a factor in creating the darkness in our lives. So Anbar Province was a place where Marines went back to all the time, and your battalion may not have gone, may have gone to Haditha one time and al-Qaim another time, but as big as the province was, you were still going to meet people that you'd served with before.

So I think the Corps deserves, in the annals of history, a lot of credit for the wisdom of sending, first of all, maintaining unit integrity to the maximum extent it can, and it could do that with seven-month tours. And, number two, sending the same units back over and over again. It's still going on, . . . and it's still successful.

**McWilliams:** How do the Marine successes in al-Anbar fit in the greater picture of Iraq?

**Allen:** The Sahwa [Awakening] was a phenomenon, and while the idea of the Awakening was a tribal idea, it could not have gotten off

the ground if it hadn't been supported by the Coalition forces. So it started in Anbar, with a fellow by the name of Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha. His brother [Achmad Fteikhan al-Rishawi] gets high marks for continuing the process of organizing the tribes to become factors in good governance. The nature of the Marine and Army engagement with the tribes gave the tribes the breathing space they needed, got al-Qaeda off their back, gave them the breathing space they needed to get themselves organized and ultimately begin to defend themselves, and that spread. And, as we would watch, for example, I would go see Sheikh Sattar, and he would have in his diwan, in his guesthouse, he'd have a guesthouse full of 40 or 50 sheikhs when I'd go to see him. And these guys would be from Diyala Province, Salah-ad-Din Province, Ninawa Province. They'd come from Baghdad, and all around the Sunni Triangle, these Awakening movements were starting, almost like franchises. And I'm sure if he hadn't been assassinated, Abdul Sattar would have eventually had them pay dues or something, because he was a consummate businessman as well as a counterinsurgent.

It started there, and I don't want to put words in General Petraeus's mouth, but I think he's been quoted in other places saying that what began in the Anbar Province spread throughout Iraq and emerged ultimately in the form of the Sons of Iraq. And this whole concept of the Sons of Iraq created neighborhood security that took some of the heat off the police and let the police get after their own counterinsurgency operations, which took some of the heat off the Iraqi army and let them do the large-scale counterinsurgency that they needed to do. And so that's really how it got kicked off, and so in many respects now the Sahwa, which was the Sahwa al-Anbar [and] is now the Sahwa al-Iraq, and it's become a political party. It's much less about counterinsurgency operations now than it is about politics, both at a provincial and national level.

**McWilliams:** What are the things that the Marines did in al-Anbar that Coalition forces in other parts of Iraq are doing now?

**Allen:** Well, I'm not sure necessarily that the Marines were doing it differently than the Army. I think the circumstances permitted what the Marines were doing to be more successful more quickly,

if you follow what I'm saying. So what I want to be clear of is that I don't want to convey that the Army wasn't doing it right. What I would convey is that the outcomes can be different, based on the security environment.

What the Marines were doing, to get very specific, was from top to bottom, at least when I was there, we were organized and guided by a very clear commander's intent that we worked very hard to craft. . . . It was something to the effect of the commander's guidance for the conduct of counterinsurgency operations in Anbar. We created a whole series of objectives based along the lines of operations, and the commander's intent unified everything from the conversations I had down to what rifle company commanders were attempting to do with the local tribal elements. So we were unified from top to bottom.

Plus, we fought as a MAGTF [Marine air-ground task force], and a MAGTF fights a single battle, and that is tactical superiority. So the combination of having a well-thought-out, easily understood commander's intent, and the fact that as a MAGTF (and I include the Army brigade in that MAGTF), we fought as a single battle throughout the entire width and breadth and depth of the province, which was a third of the country, [which] gave us the ability to take a huge chunk of the Iraqi terrain off the map as a place where al-Qaeda could find safe haven and safe passage. When we were able to do that for a third of the country, the simple dynamic changed in Iraq.

**McWilliams:** When you look at Iraq as a whole, how does Anbar presently fit in that?

**Allen:** It's very quiet, which is just what you want. When I read the intelligence reporting or I talk to people that have been in there visiting, they echo all of that. And so what's happening in Anbar is what we want to have happen in any country that is emerging from an insurgency, and that is predictability of government, the establishment of the rule of law, the effectiveness of the security forces, [and] the development of economic opportunity. All of that is well underway in the Anbar Province because when you get up in the morning there, your first question isn't "am I going to live to see the sunset," your first question is "how do I get my sheep to market?"

And if that's the worst problem you've got that day, then things are okay in that part of the Arab world. It took longer for that to be the first question in other places, but throughout a great deal of Iraq, much of what occurred in Anbar is occurring also routinely now.

**McWilliams:** Sir, going back to Colonel MacFarland, you said he took a risk in engaging these local sheikhs. Was that on his own initiative?

**Allen:** Sure. Because General Rick Zilmer created an environment where he expected his regimental and brigade commanders to take initiative, it was. It was on his own initiative. The history is inaccurately painting that the Marines were unhappy with him for doing that. To my knowledge, that is in fact completely erroneous. That's not true. So I don't know where that comes from, but Sean MacFarland deserves a lot of credit for having reached out to Sheikh Sattar.

Now here's the problem. . . . It was difficult to contact the sheikhs when the security environment was so bad. If you were a sheikh and you got seen with Americans, the chances were very good you were going to pay for it in a very bad way. Your family was going to be assassinated, you were going to get killed, your flocks would be driven off. Something bad was going to happen to you. We talked about operating inside the tribes. You can't win an insurgency as long as you're operating outside the human terrain.

Once we were able to penetrate the tribes and be accepted and trusted by them, then we were able to then isolate al-Qaeda and go after them and eliminate them, and that was our goal. So the problem was penetrating the tribes, and from roughly the latter part of the summer of '06 until our battle handover, that process was just really getting underway. That's where I credit Rick Zilmer and Dave Reist and Bob Neller because they continued to have very aggressive security operations throughout the province and, where possible, make contact with the tribes with the idea of creating relationships.

Part of the problem was [that] you couldn't find sheikhs to talk to, because of the reasons I just said. But sometimes you'd talk to sheikhs, and they weren't the right ones. You'll hear the term "fake sheikh." And some of these guys were fake sheikhs. The problem

with Abdul Sattar was because others of his family had already been killed by al-Qaeda, he was not really what you might consider the preeminent member in his family to be the paramount sheikh. That was the first thing. Second, the Abu Risha tribe isn't a particularly significant tribe. It pales in comparison with the lineage of the Abu Nimer or the Abu Mahal or the Abu Issa tribe, many of these other—Abu Fahd. I mean, these are famous tribes in the history of Araby. You don't hear anything about the Abu Risha tribe. So he's a guy who isn't necessarily the number-one guy in his tribe, in a tribe that's kind of a second- or a third-tier tribe. So when Abu Risha comes to you and says, "I've got the ability to provide three battalion-sized formations of tribal militia, right now, if you'll help us out with some projects to try to make life better for our poor people," that's a risk, because you're going to give him money, and you're not sure where that money's going to go, because it's difficult for you to get into that area, because of security, to ensure the projects are being taken care of.

Here's the other problem: a lot of the sheikhs that we were talking to, the lineal sheikhs, and remember I told you it's all about power? A lot of those sheikhs aren't going to give any credit to a guy like Abu Risha for being an organizer and a leader because, in giving that guy credit, in giving Abu Risha credit in the concept of patronage and zero sum with regards to power and honor and shame, when a sheikh of a large lineal tribe gives credit to a guy like Abu Risha for being successful, when that sheikh himself wasn't successful, he has just assumed shame and given up honor.

I'm not being theoretical here. I'm telling you the way it is, in terms of tribal dynamics. So the way these guys, in order not to make themselves look impotent or incompetent when the time comes to justify to their own tribes on how come Abu Risha is doing so well on behalf of the Coalition, is to say [that] the Coalition doesn't understand him. The Coalition doesn't understand that he's a murderer and smuggler and a criminal. They constantly denigrated him.

So the risk was for those people outside who didn't really understand what was going on with the tribes, and Sean MacFarland reaching to Abdul Sattar. The risk was the appearance that Colonel MacFarland was dealing with a common criminal and

a murderer, and the truth was, guess what? All the sheikhs are like that. Now I'm not proposing that all the sheikhs are common criminals and murderers, but what I'm telling you is, the way they portray each other in this concept of honor and shame, you've got to be very, very careful about what you hear and what you believe when one sheikh starts talking about another sheikh.

First of all, Sean is a great student of history. He's also a great student of tactics, and he understood counterinsurgency ops, and he understood that people are the critical terrain. People are the center of gravity in an insurgency, and if you don't pay attention to the people, then you will always be surprised by what happens around you, especially in a tribal environment. If you don't leverage what the tribes bring you on the battlefield, then the tribes will always confuse you. As we used to say in the Anbar Province, the first lens you look through when you're considering what's happening in front of you is the lens of tribalism.

**McWilliams:** You mentioned Marines approached Anbar as being historically significant. Do you have any other observations on that, sir?

**Allen:** Sure. We studied the tribes. We truly prepared ourselves and prepared our minds for what we were going to encounter there, and not to take away from anyone else's efforts in previous conflicts, but for the moment—and I'll speak to II MEF, because I only know II MEF, really. From the moment we all came together as a team, we put our professional military education to work in shaping our minds, understanding that unless we went in fully understanding the tribalism, understanding the personalities that we were going to face, and the whole dynamics of this code of conduct associated with being a member of an Arab tribe in Mesopotamia, you were not going to fully grasp the opportunities in front of you.

So we trained, and we studied, and we spoke with members of tribes. We learned from Iraqis, we brought in sociologists, and we went over. This was an historic means of preparation, and we hit the ground running and immediately were able to capitalize on the great work that had been done by I MEF ahead of us.



**2008**  
**Transition to Iraqi Control**  
**2009**





Interview 17

***Transition to Iraqi Control, Part I***

## Major General John F. Kelly

*Commanding General  
I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)  
Multi National Force • West*

February 2008 to February 2009

Major General John F. Kelly was deputy commanding general for I Marine Expeditionary Force and served as commanding general of Multi National Force-West from February 2008 to February 2009, his third tour in Iraq. Previously, he served as assistant commanding general of 1st Marine Division during the drive to Baghdad in 2003. He subsequently led Task Force Tripoli to Tikrit, then supervised the division's security and stability operations in seven Shi'a provinces in southern Iraq during the summer of 2003. He returned to Iraq in 2004 in the same capacity when I Marine Expeditionary Force deployed to al-Anbar Province.

When Major General Kelly returned to Iraq in 2008 as the commanding general of Multi National Force-West, he focused on closing U.S. camps, downsizing Coalition forces, demilitarizing cities, and transferring control of al-Anbar's governance and security to the Iraqis.

In this interview, Major General Kelly describes meeting with Iraqi sheikhs, police, and soldiers to gain their perspectives on the insurgency, al-Qaeda, and the Sahwa, or Awakening. He details the Marines' role in the Awakening, particularly how Marines trained Iraqi police and soldiers, and also mentions erroneous accounts of the Awakening. Finally, he notes some of the elements in turning al-Anbar Province's security over to the Iraqis.

Major General Kelly was interviewed by Colonel Gary W. Montgomery on 26 March 2009 at Camp Pendleton, California.

**Colonel Gary W. Montgomery:** What differences did you see from deployment to deployment, as far as on our side, or from the other side?

**Major General John F. Kelly:** . . . After I left [September 2004], al-Qaeda had come in strong at that point, you had [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and these were brutal, awful men. The price for working with us might have been that your eight-year-old daughter is brutally raped, and they send you the videotape, or she's raped and thrown into a bonfire. These kind of things were commonly reported.

When I came in for this last tour, I started to talk to sheikhs, and [Iraqi] policemen, [and Iraqi army officers and listened to] the stories they told. Many of the men that were now policemen were former insurgents. . . . I could sit and talk to a lot of these men and ask, "How did it start?" And they'd all say, "Oh, my brother," or "my friend, let's not talk about those days." No, it'd be interesting, particularly [with] the army guys, to see what we did wrong, how did this thing start? And they'd say, "What did you do wrong? Everything." . . .

Everyone, when they would talk to me, sheikhs, policemen, army guys that we would deal with, [told me that] it all came to that April '03 "massacre," as they called it, [fighting between U.S. soldiers and Iraqis in Fallujah] was the point at which they were convinced we were bad people, "we" meaning the Coalition. We were anti-Sunni, we were pro-Shi'a, and they couldn't work with us because we had gunned down 77 people—this is them talking—and didn't apologize, wouldn't admit that we had done something wrong. Subordinate to that was the disbandment of the army and the fact that we didn't seem to be working very hard in Anbar to right some of these UN [United Nations] sanction-type wrongs. . . .

As the insurgency started, let's call it outraged citizens getting guns to fight us, the so-called "nationalists," because of the heavy-handedness or whatever it was called, outraged citizens. And that insurgency then was taken over by al-Qaeda, who came in with a willingness to die, a lot of money, a lot of organization. Over time, the common cause between the two groups that were fighting us turned into an al-Qaeda kind of directed insurgency, but then the sheikhs again telling you that as al-Qaeda began to try to establish their brand of lifestyle—extreme sharia law—and started to actually execute people, beating women who are uncovering their faces. If they saw someone smoking, they'd beat them.

As the sheikhs started to resist them—or not cooperate with them maybe is a better way to do it—they started trying to kill the sheikhs. More than one of the paramount senior sheikhs, the paramount dignified sheikhs, of which in Anbar Province there's 17 of them, these are the guys that when you meet with them don't ask you for anything. They don't ask you for the contracts. These are the top-tier tribal leaders.

Kind of as a sidebar, one of the statuses that the Marine commander had on the ground—me now, [Richard T.] Rick Tryon before me, [Walter E.] Walt Gaskin before him, General [Richard C.] Zilmer—we were considered to be a paramount dignified sheikh of sheikhs of the Marine tribe, and that became the recognized, most powerful tribe in the province—the richest tribe, and the most militarily capable. So I would go to these sheikh engagements where sometimes there would be 200 sheikhs there, but my proper place was with the paramount dignified sheikhs. And if I spent too much time with one of the second- [or] third-tier sheikhs, one of my peers, if you would, would come over and direct me. “Okay, you're being very benevolent, but you're spending too much time with him,” would be the message. “Come over here with the senior sheikhs.”

As they relay the story, al-Qaeda couldn't be reasoned with, there was only one other force there that might be willing to work with them, and that was us, the Army and the Marines that were in the province. . . .

What I find interesting is . . . the number of people who were taking credit for the Awakening—and not Iraqis, but U.S. military guys. . . . Before the history was written, revisionist history was already being written around individuals. There are colonels and even generals that are saying, “I was the one that started the Awakening. I dealt with the tribes.” It's always fascinating to me when people want to take that much credit. But, in any event, when the Awakening did start, it was an amazing process, because suddenly you had a people that were fighting us, and in their mind fighting us for good reasons—the nationalists, or the righteous men, wronged kind of guys—they suddenly started working with us.

**Montgomery:** Was the Awakening something that we caused, or that we enabled?

**Kelly:** I wasn't there for it, but many conversations with the sheikhs lead me to believe strongly that al-Qaeda caused it, and we enabled it. The people that had been fighting us, or trying to stand on the sidelines were between a rock and a hard place, one of the rocks was al-Qaeda. They couldn't go to them and say, "Hey, listen, let's make an accommodation," because of course al-Qaeda had a view of the caliphate and Iraq and extreme sharia law and all of that, so they couldn't turn to them. And then you had the hard place, the Coalition, but maybe that was sandstone. And we had always said, and General [James N.] Mattis actually coined the phrases "no better friend, no worse enemy, than a United States Marine," and "first, do no harm."

The sheikhs would tell me that in spite of the fact that we were killing you guys, either us or al-Qaeda, in spite of the fact that we were rocketing you all the time, you were still trying to force us to work with you. Limited use of force, trying to work with them all the time, working with the governor, trying to repair stuff—all of this, even in the bad days, [kept the door open]. So they came to us, and we enabled them to continue this so-called Awakening process.

They deserve a lot of credit. [But] to a degree, they did not fight al-Qaeda. They no longer supported the fight, and helped us identify who al-Qaeda was, where they were. There are individual sheikhs who would take down the one or two fighters and drop a headless body off at the main gate of one of the combat bases. And you cannot understate the effectiveness of the task force, the special operators who [went] after al-Qaeda—the individual takedown of individual fighters. They took the network down at the leadership level. It cannot be understated how much work they did and continue to do, and they did the same thing, focusing on the Shi'a militia groups.

But to answer your question, I think al-Qaeda caused it and we enabled it. In this last tour, I'm more than willing to give my *wasta*, as it's called, as the head of the Marine tribe, to the head of one of the other tribes, so that his people will hold him in high regard,

because he's helping us help them, if you know what I mean. I used to talk in groups and give huge credit to sheikhs who were there, who fought al-Qaeda, knowing full well the guy spent all of his time in Jordan. Still, he would pump up, and his people would become proud of him, and all that kind of thing. They rule with this issue of *wasta* and respect and all of that.

Many of these sheikhs were sent outside the country. We in America sometimes looked at the guys who left the country as cowards or something. Many of the tribes—these guys left the country, the tribes told them to go to Jordan and Syria, because they were the senior guys, and it's too messy—there's not a real process to select a new sheikh—so they sent these guys. They were the obvious targets of al-Qaeda, al-Qaeda was going after them, and the tribes for their own safety [sent them of the country]. . . .

Sheikh [Abdul] Sattar [Abu Risha] got an awful lot of the credit, but he's not a paramount dignified sheikh, nor is his brother normally considered one of the paramount sheikhs. . . .

**Montgomery:** But do you think that we could have won in Anbar if al-Qaeda had been less heavy-handed?

**Kelly:** . . . That's an interesting question. What if al-Qaeda had never shown up? If al-Qaeda had never shown up, and we were allowed to fight the fight we wanted to after Fallujah II, without the constant pressure to fight the insurgents militarily—at that point, it would have only been nationalist insurgents. I think we could have won. The Iraqis admit that they couldn't fight us. The things that the insurgents deal with with us was how fast we could react to them. They knew when they fought us, when they had an ambush, they had 40 seconds or less, because just a minute after that, we had gunships or we had, I was talking to some of them about how when they fought us, ambushed us, it seemed we were always trying to get around behind them, cut them off.

In this fight, the built-up areas were the sanctuaries. In the Vietnam War, it was the jungle where they hid. In this war, it was Fallujah, Ramadi, Saqlawiyah. Get back to those built-up areas, bury the gun or throw the gun in the loft, and then go back to being

just a normal Iraqi. Many of them would comment to me that as soon as it started, you immediately started maneuvering to try to get in behind us. That's what we teach Marines. But within a few minutes, we had gunships [on scene]. So they understood that they couldn't beat us militarily.

Had we, the Marines and the Army units in Anbar, only had a military approach to the problem, we could be still banging away at each other today. But you had the "do-no-harm" stand, and the task force tracking down the bad guys. At the same time, us attempting to help, I think, was the war-winning strategy. We just couldn't apply it until the population at least became somewhat supportive of us. . . .

**Montgomery:** Given that we've heard from various sources that insurgencies often last 10 years—it's not unusual—this one turned relatively quickly.

**Kelly:** . . . The advantage we had, of course, was our police, certainly by the time I got there, they were good enough to handle things. And the two army divisions that we trained in Anbar, starting back when General [John F.] Sattler was there, were very good. So the advantage we had was our security forces, so-called ISF, Iraqi security forces, were appreciably better than anyone else in the country, and everyone acknowledged that.

And we, in this third tour, started to back away, because it became clear to me that we were stunting their growth. They'd gotten to this point, but as long as there were Marines working so close with them, they were never going to advance beyond that point, so we started to back away. We started to take Marines out of the police stations 24/7. We didn't stop engaging with them, but we started to back out. We went from 109 police stations occupied to 21, and we shifted the duties of the Marines and soldiers in the PTTs, the police transition teams, to training them to do police work, protect-and-defend kind of work, crime scene preservation and investigative techniques, this kind of thing. Did the same thing with the army.

And the reason we won in Anbar, in a lot of ways, we had very, very large military transition teams, MTTs, down in the division level,

or division, brigade and battalion level. They were three times bigger than the requirement [set] by the RFF, by the request for forces. They were three times bigger. Why? I think it was General Sattler that said, "In order to train these guys, we've got to be with them 24/7. We've got to eat with them, play soccer with them, live with them, fight with them." We didn't know if we could trust them three and half, four years ago, so we made the transition teams big enough that if there was treachery, the transition teams could defend themselves until a grunt unit, QRF, quick reaction force, got to them.

By the time I got there, standing on the shoulders of every Marine, soldier, and sailor that had served there before me, started looking at the fact that we were stunting the continued professionalism and growth of the army because we had these very large transition teams. So we cut all of the transition teams pretty much when I got there down to the RFF levels. As an example, we had at the division level 37 in a MTT team. There was only a requirement for 11, so we cut it down to 11. And then a Marine colonel, pretty high-quality guy, post command, maybe battalion commander, . . . as long as that colonel was the adviser, the head of the MTT team, he essentially was the commander of the division, and the two-star Iraqi guy would defer to him so much that in reality, again, the two-star Iraqi guy was not truly the commander. It was the colonel. Every decision, they'd look at the colonel and say, "Well, is this a good decision?"

So we also not only cut the MTT teams down to RFF size, but we went one rank lower, so the colonel became a lieutenant colonel, and obviously every rank one rank lower. And then frankly by the midpoint of my tour, we started to un-MTT [remove advisors from] the battalions to where there was no MTT team with the battalion, and we maintained a MTT team significantly smaller at the brigade level and at the division level. When I left, we started to un-MTT at the battalion level, and then change them from what they were, which is really a shadow command structure, to advisers, as opposed to, again, what they were, which was this shadow thing.

All of this is why we were so successful in training our police and our army units. They did very, very well in the fights, independent fights they got involved in. They were the ones that went down in Basrah in March of '08 [and] saved the day. They went to Sadr City and saved the day. They're in Diyala fighting now, they're in Baghdad. These are independent brigades that do very, very well. It shocked people in Baghdad when they watched how good the 1st [Iraqi Army] Division [was]. Most of the 1st Division left Anbar and went under Major General Tariq [Abdul Wahab Jassim] to Basrah. This is after the 14th Division mutinied, or melted away, or whatever—collapsed. And the next division they sent in was the 1st Division, trained in Anbar by the Marine Corps, and they were phenomenal.

The British commander called me and said, “How the hell did you guys do this?” He said, “We can't get them to leave the base, and they [the 1st Division] went right to work. They're in the city, they're fighting. How'd you get them to do that?” When units from these divisions flew out to Diyala, the American division commander called and said, “Where'd you get these guys?” And, just as importantly—more importantly—the Iraqi division, battalion, brigades that they fought with in those other places saw what was possible. And what was interesting, the 1st and 7th Division out of Anbar [is] 60 percent Shi'a and only 40 percent local Sunni boys. So you had a mixed division that was Iraqi [that was] very good in a couple of tough fights. And the prime minister [Nouri Kamil Mohammed Hassan al-Maliki] recognized how important it was for the Iraqis to fight these fights. . . .

More than once I've been asked in interviews and whatnot, how much did the surge help or turn the tide in Anbar? Of course the reality is there were almost no surge forces in Anbar. When the surge came in, General [David H.] Petraeus put the surge forces where he thought he most needed them. . . . So you didn't have much in the way of surge forces out there, and really, in a lot of ways we were kind of left alone. The Marine commanders were kind of left alone.

Once the disastrous decision was made, I think, to go into Fallujah I, and of course an awful lot of people were involved in making us

do Fallujah I ran for cover, and to this day, you can never find the guy that actually ordered it. You read [former Ambassador L. Paul] Bremer's book, and he's critical of the Marines and all that, but the point is that we were allowed to kind of do our own thing out there, which is consistent with our culture anyway.

But I was talking about the counterinsurgency manual. People have asked me, was it the counterinsurgency manual, that you finally had an updated counterinsurgency manual, so you could then execute and fight the war? And I said, "Well, I think the counterinsurgency manuals we had in the past were perfectly good, in my personal opinion." I think the counterinsurgency tactics, techniques, and procedures we learned from Vietnam and other counterinsurgencies were very valid. . . .

One of the ways we kept the nationalist insurgents that used to make a lot of noise about starting to fight us again when I was just past in Iraq was to convince them we were leaving. We would talk through some of the former Ba'athists, through some of the generals that had contacts with these mostly former army officers who were national 1920 Brigade, those guys. And I would do it personally, and all the commanders would say the same thing. We'd say, "Look, the number-one item on your agenda is for the Coalition to leave. That is also the number-one item on our agenda. So you're going to get what you want. In the meantime, we're trying to help, so don't fight us."

One of the reasons we closed Camp Fallujah [is that] Fallujah in this war, it will be the Mount Suribachi or the Hue City or the Tet Offensive, if you will. Fallujah will be the name that will always be remembered from this war. We had a Camp Fallujah. I needed to get smaller anyway. We were in the process of trying to guard ourselves, so we picked Camp Fallujah [in part because of the name]; the message was, the camps we needed the most in the bad days were closing because we were getting smaller.

Remember, when I got there, I had 38,000 U.S. military personnel under my command. When I left, I had 23,000. The Army left almost entirely, but the point is that I believe we convinced the nationalists that were getting a little bit frustrated, because the

security situation got better. However, things weren't getting better fast enough, because the central government wasn't very quick to respond, and we convinced them we were going home. And I would get out there and tell them all the time. Look, I did radio shows. We put these in newspapers. I used to be 38 [thousand], now I'm 30, now I'm 25, now I'm 23, we're getting smaller. We closed Camp Fallujah with a lot of fanfare. It took us about a year to close it. We started an IO [information operations] campaign to tell the communities we're leaving, and we have to close these bases. We closed the base at al-Qaim. We left Habbaniyah. And all of this was purposely advertised to convince a lot of these guys that . . . we're going home, we want to go home, this thing is all but over. Hang tough.

And we engaged an awful lot of senior former Ba'athists, and they had blood on their hands, but they were excluded from rehabilitation by the anti-Ba'ath laws, but these weren't murderers. . . . We engaged with these guys. We worked on behalf of them to get their pensions. I think about 75 percent of them finally got their pensions from the central government. We won them on our side, and they had big influence with these young guys who were the former leaders of the nationalist insurgents. And the message was, just be patient, and they worked on our behalf to keep those guys patient.





Interview 18  
*Transition to Iraqi Control, Part II*

## Brigadier General Martin Post

*Deputy Commanding General  
I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)  
Multi National Force • West*

February 2008 to February 2009

Brigadier General Martin Post, a Marine aviator, was deputy commanding general for I Marine Expeditionary Force and served as deputy commanding general of Multi National Force-West from February 2008 to February 2009. He was responsible for governance, economics, and reconstruction in al-Anbar Province.

In this interview, Major General Post discusses the transition from II Marine Expeditionary Force to I Marine Expeditionary Force, work on the fuel and power supply, and efforts to improve governance and economic capacity. He describes the relationship with the State Department's provincial reconstruction teams and embedded provincial reconstruction teams and their joint efforts to improve the agriculture sector. He details helping the Iraqis develop budgets and describes improvements in security, the drop in kinetic violence, the transition to Iraq control, the success of Marine military and police training teams, the reduction of Coalition forces, and detainee releases.

Brigadier General Post was interviewed by Colonel Stephen E. Motsco on 18 March 2009 at Camp Pendleton, California.

**Colonel Stephen E. Motsco:** Can you describe your recent tour as the deputy commanding general of Multi National Force-West?

**Brigadier General Martin Post:** . . . Let me just preface the timing of what transpired. II MEF [II Marine Expeditionary Force] was there [in al-Anbar Province] prior to us. II MEF really came out of the fight. When they got there, there was still some pretty significant fighting going on. That would have been in early '07 time frame. And then, come about the summer of '07, things started to improve. That was really kind of the back side of the Awakening, if you want to call it that, where the Sunni tribes came and were working with the Coalition forces in Anbar to fight al-Qaeda.

One of the things that you really have to understand is the tribes *are* Anbar. There are tribes all throughout Iraq, but the tribes in Anbar, the Sunni tribes, are really the real deal. They pretty much run [things], from a day-to-day perspective. They are the connecting file here with the people. There's nothing that goes on inside Anbar Province that is not affiliated in some way, shape, or form through tribal connections or tribal law or so forth.

So one of the things that General John [R.] Allen did, who was the deputy CG [commanding general] for II MEF, he spent [a great deal] of time bringing back tribal leaders back into Anbar who [had] gone to Jordan. He spent a lot of time doing kind of shuttle diplomacy and went back and brought them back. And so, really, by the time we showed up, in January of 2008, for all intent and purposes, all the paramount sheikhs for the tribes were back in place. There were still onesies and twosies in Jordan, but, quite frankly, at that time those guys were never going to come back. And even though we did talk to a couple of them, they were kind of sitting pretty comfortable. They were truly more businessmen at this junction, turned into international businessmen, and I don't think, they may come back here in three or four years if Iraq continues to progress. So really, when you take a look at the tribe piece of this thing, the II MEF had brought all the tribes back, so I didn't have to really worry about that. I didn't have to worry about doing that type of engagement, because they were all there.

What we worked on . . . was really economics and the governance piece of this thing, continuing to try to ensure that process. I spent a lot of time, obviously, as you would expect, with the governor, with the provincial council, which was a body of about 49 folks that were kind of your legislative side of the state, which in this case was the Anbar Province. And so we, collectively, with the PRT [provincial reconstruction team], but really to start with—I'll kind of describe this—there was a transition while we were there. When we got there, it was kind of like the MNF-West [Multi National Force-West] was in charge, and the PRT followed . . . Even though the PRT had a role and responsibilities, because of the security situation, because of how this thing had transitioned, we kind of ran everything, if you would, in coordination and conjunction with a good relationship with the PRT.

There were four PRTs in Anbar. There was the provincial PRT, which was in Ramadi. You had an ePRT [embedded provincial reconstruction team] in Fallujah, another ePRT in Ramadi for the city of Ramadi proper, which was the capital, and then you had an ePRT in al-Asad, which covered from Hit all the way out to the Syrian border, up the Euphrates River Valley.

We got in there, sat down and started taking a look at the state of affairs with respect to Anbar. It became real clear early on that there were two common denominators. One was on the infrastructure side—power and fuel. You weren't going to get anything done because of the current state of those two primary, key linchpins in restarting an economy. So the deal was, if we could increase the amount of fuel that's brought into the province, and at that point they were getting less than 10 million liters a month of all types of product, whether it be kerosene, gas, or what I call benzene, which is their gas. It was about a tenth of what they needed, what they required. They were getting about 20 percent of the power they needed in the province, off the national grid, because of the status of the national grid. So what that told you it would be is they were getting about four to six hours of power a day, off the national grid—average—across the province. And everybody depended upon generators for the rest of the time. Of course, you need fuel to run generators. And so you can see, again, it was this Catch-22-type deal with them.

So if you're talking about businesses, if you're talking about trying to get investors—all of the things that you want to do to try to get this economy turned around—always went back to fuel and power, right from the get-go. The power situation was such that we weren't ever going to solve that problem, because that's about a 5- to 10-year problem. [For example,] a major power plant [is] being built in Anbar, by Haditha. . . . [But] they stopped work because the negotiations with contracts. . . . Haditha Dam [is] the big power producer for the province, [but] even though the Haditha Dam was pushing out power inside Anbar Province, they couldn't keep it all. They had to push it out and get their allocation back.

So at the end of the day, we knew that the power situation was going to be kind of a throwaway, so we really concentrated on fuel.

When we first got there, they were doing two fuel runs a month, up to the Baiji oil refinery, escorted by Marines, basically bringing back about 200 trucks a month, 250 sometimes, of the products—kerosene, diesel, and benzene, or gas, if you would. And of course, as I said, that was hardly enough to make anything work. I sat down with the governor, I said, “Listen, this isn’t going to work. We need to come up with a better way.” Plus, we said, “Us going out and escorting your fuel shipments, in the long run, we’ve got to get out of this. We’re not going to do this forever for you.” So there was a lot of negotiations that went on. We finally got them to come to the table and get a private contractor in to start moving fuel. It took a while to get this thing cranking. It was about a four- or five-month process. But, at the end of the day, when we left, they were getting about anywhere between 800 and 1,000 trucks a month, so it was about a four- to five-fold increase in fuel coming into the province, which was substantial.

The second piece of it was there was an oil refinery up near Haditha, called Haqlaniyah, or . . . “K3,” that’s the oil refinery. Obviously, the pipes from Baiji to K3 were mincemeat, so that wasn’t going to work, so we sat down and figured out, hey, how can we get crude oil down to the refinery and start refining the product in the province proper? We decided, hey, maybe we can move it by train. There was a large train station right there, within about four clicks [kilometers] of the K3. I took a look at the mechanics of this thing, said it’s feasible, and so over about a three-month period, from nothing but dirt to a facility at a railroad [siding], where you could pull train cars in, offload the crew right there, put the pumps, put all the piping in and pump it all the way four clicks over to K3. Then it went through the whole iteration of restarting K3 refinery. The U.S. government spent about \$4 million on that, and there was some Iraqi government money spent, not a lot, but the governor provided us some money. But at the end of the day, as that effort works and we got the refinery started, and actually, we started producing fuel right there in Anbar.

There’s a subset here to this, because I told you about the power plant up by Haditha. There was a pipeline running from this K3 over to that power plant. That power plant ran off of heavy fuel oil,

which is a by-product of refining, and there was a pipeline built to that. So at the end of the day, when that power plant is completed, you have to have K3 running, because they're going to use the by-product of heavy fuel oil to run their generators, to produce the power. So there was a connecting dot here in the long term for how you were going to get power, more power to the national grid. Also, another refinery running, putting more people to work and so forth. So that was probably one of the successes that when we walked away, from a fuel standpoint, where in some cases we were getting equivalency up over 1,000 trucks a month, when we started with less than 200 when we first got there.

When we first got there, everybody complained about fuel. When we left, there were never any complaints about having enough fuel. It was power. And of course the one thing that was increased because of what the fuel, all the local generators, they had more fuel. The moms were happy because there was maybe four or five or six hours of additional power a day being generated there by neighborhoods or your own local generator.

So those things, again, it gets back to the basic premise of when you're trying to re crank a country back up, with the infrastructure of a country. There was some war damage to infrastructure, but it was primarily superficial. When you get down to water, sewage, all the basic, fundamental things you need to run a society as we would think of it, most of it was dilapidated. It was in place, or in some cases just had not been maintained, so what we found ourselves is we had to go in and, in a lot of cases go in and start fixing that type of stuff.

As you would expect, [such efforts were] problematic because, again, Anbar Province is kind of unique. The eastern side of Anbar, Fallujah and Ramadi, was about 70 percent of the population—two cities. Of course, eastern Anbar is the smallest size. Then you go from Hit all the way out to the Euphrates, Syrian border, and then all the way down to Jordan. As you know, it's spread out pretty well, so now trying to go back into those cities, up toward Hit, Haditha, Rawah, Ana, al-Qaim, and so forth and trying to look at those individual infrastructures and fix things that needed to get

done. So really, what we did on that was we had our civil affairs detts [detachments] that were actually with the RCTs [regimental combat teams], and they worked hand in hand with the ePRTs. And so what you had was—I call it the tactical-level stuff—they were down there looking at individual problems in individual cities, prioritizing with the local councils, trying to figure out what money they were getting from the Iraqi government to fix things. And what we would do is come in, either using DoD [Department of Defense] funds, CERP [commander's emergency relief program] or DoS [Department of State] funds, QRF funds—quick reaction funds. They would try to identify an issue and try to help fix something, some piece of infrastructure.

So it was slow going in some cases, but in other cases, because of how we could manipulate or how we could use DoD funds, especially CERP, is we could get things done pretty quick. Going through our process was fairly quick at the MEF, so repairing infrastructure, repairing schools, post offices, community centers, all the things that had to get done. A lot of that, quite frankly, is because Marines have lived in a lot of these facilities, or the Iraqi forces have lived in these cities during the fight. So what we did is, when we started getting this province back on its feet, all of a sudden, well, those buildings used to be part of running cities or towns. So now you had, once you pull them out, of course, they were, as you would expect, gutted, nothing there. So we went back in and put them back to really better than what they were previously, whether it be a schoolhouse, or a mayor's office, or a municipalities building, power, electricity, air conditioning, all the things that you would need so somebody could go in there and go to work.

So we spent [a lot] of time through 2008, all the way through Anbar, basically rebuilding that infrastructure that could sustain, as I would call it, kind of the leadership or the workforce to get the economy moving, to get the things up and running. So that was a balancing act, and of course the toughest challenge we had—and it was a learning process—was training the Iraqis how to plan and how to do, as you and I call it, O&M, operations and maintenance. We don't have the time or energy here this morning to go through

the ministries in Baghdad, how all that worked, but needless to say, it's pretty chaotic, it's pretty top-down, and quite frankly, the Iraqis would build something. They'd build it and that was it. They would not have budgets to go back in, like we would have a budget, to, okay, I've got to put X amount of dollars in there to keep the thing running, check filters, and go back and do all the things you would want to do.

So trying to have them understand that, well, that's a key piece. I could build the facility for you, but in six months, if you don't keep up with it, if you don't have trained technicians doing it, then in six months it'll break, and then you're going to walk away from it. Their weakest—from a provincial level, the governor of the provincial council and the director generals (the DGs) of all the different entities—their weakest thing was planning. You've got to remember, they were [used to] centralized planning, everything from Baghdad. They gave it to you, they executed it, and nobody—you never questioned Baghdad. So if they didn't give you the money to sustain it, it was like, well, tough.

[We're] trying to have them understand that, okay, if you're going to do this, then where is the follow-through? I'll rebuild this school, get the DG of education for the city and the DG of education for the province, have them sit down and say, "Okay, where are the teachers? Where are the school supplies? Where are all the desks? Where are all the things that you need to stand this school up?" And once we started doing that, all of a sudden, the light bulbs started coming on with these folks. Okay, they got it. What we were trying to do was reengineer 40 years of mindset of how things work. . . .

The planning piece was the most difficult, and part and parcel of that was . . . the ability to build a budget. Again, previously, provinces were just given things. They never submitted a budget request, per se. Each ministry would go down through their director general into a province, minister of electricity, minister of oil, minister of health, minister of education. They would all have individual budgets, would come into the province, and those director generals would do what they needed to do in their health

or education, disconnected really from what the governor or the provincial council was doing. So trying to get those two bodies to sit down and say, “Okay, let’s look strategically at the province. What do we need to do to build a budget?”

So in 2008, an extraordinary amount of work was done, and we brought some comptrollers in, a couple of guys from Headquarters Marine Corps who do this for a living, actually from P&R, Programs and Resources, and we basically. We give [the Iraqis] an A for effort, but it was probably a C- end product, but they built a budget. And [the comptrollers] went from city to city and sat down with each city council, and they said, “Okay, you prioritize what your issues are. You break it out by sector. What projects do you need?” And they went all through the province, brought all that back to Ramadi, racked and stacked them all, and then at the end of the day, they submitted that budget back there, and that was submitted in July of 2008. So that was the first time that a province had ever really that methodically had gone through and looked at it.

And again, first time, it wasn’t perfect, how we would look at it from a Western eye. We’d kind of go, “Oh, I’m not liking this.” But, at the end of the day, that worked. . . . They’re going through those throes in Anbar right now in preparation for the 2010 budget. They’re working now for that next iteration. So hopefully what will happen here is what they learned last year, what they’re going to see for what they need for this year, build that dedicated planning, but a budget also built on a good planning foundation, and submit that to Baghdad.

And, hopefully, over time, they will slowly start to build their infrastructure back up to where it needs to be. Again, I go back to the basic fundamentals. I think three to five years, the power is going to be, there’s obviously from a national grid perspective, there’s going to be a substantial increase in power in the province and throughout Iraq. So what that will happen is, to me, [when that happens], it puts them as a second-tier world country, because now they have power 24/7. [In the United States] it’s a state of emergency if you don’t have power for two hours, especially with our wives. But if you can imagine living on six to eight hours of power when it’s 120 degrees out—tough living.

This equates back to who wants to go in and invest in Iraq? A lot of people said, “Oh, the only way to fix Iraq is to get investors to come in and do all this, and they’ll make it happen.” Yeah, but there are certain things that an investor wants to have. So if I’m going to go build a plant down in Georgia, I’m going to have water, I’m going to have power. I’m going to have all the things that are there. I go and just plug into them, quite frankly. It’s not easy, but it’s fundamentally there. If you’re going to build a plant in Anbar Province, well, the first thing you’ve got is you’re going to have to bring in four one-megawatt generators because there’s not enough power to run that plant. Oh, by the way, you have to have fuel to do that, and how are you going to [get that]? There’s just a degree of difficulty that some people, quite frankly—and I’m talking about some very senior people in the U.S. government—never thought through.

But, having said that, we did spend a lot of time over in Jordan. We did spend a lot of time working with international businessmen. A lot of expats from Anbar went to Jordan, took a lot of money with them. They’re willing to come back, and some have come back and, quite frankly, some of them are already investing in Anbar Province, which is good, which we didn’t have to set up. They’re entrepreneurs. If they see there’s money to be made, guys will figure out how to do it. There are already capitalists running around, without a doubt, in Anbar, throughout Iraq. They’re figuring out real quick if there is money to be had, people will figure out a way to provide a service, and they’re making that work. So, as I look at it, there’s going to be a steady increase. . . .

There was one constant in Anbar—agriculture. At one time, Anbar Province used to be kind of the bread basket, because the Euphrates River runs right through the middle of it. And, quite frankly, if you have water in the desert, anything grows. But what we found, like anything else, was the infrastructure of that had not been taken care of. [There was] a lack of education of how to maintain fields, how they do water management. It was very, very poor. Now, quite frankly, I will tell you that we happened to have a couple—go figure—a couple farmers, Reservists. One guy was a potato farmer from the state of Washington. He knew this stuff. The PRT obviously had some USAID [United States Agency for

International Development] guys in there, and also some ag experts from the States.

We sat down and took a look at what could we do in the agriculture sector. First thing is, well, it's like anything else. There's subsets. The first is the water. You've got to move the water, and then you've got to get it to the fields, and then you've got to—there's about eight steps here to make things work. Thirty-five provincial-level water pumping stations, three-quarters of them weren't working. Okay, let me fix that. That's mechanic stuff, that's pumps and generators, so we did that, through the Iraqis—sat down with the Iraqis, mapped it all out. What do we have to get done? Where are they at? Even finding some of these damn things, by lat-long grid, took us a while. But at the end of the day, we got all that squared away. Hundreds of miles of canals in Anbar, small, large, basically have to be maintained on a three- to five-year cycle or they just go up in reeds. And the reeds that grow in these damn things, it's like a piece of barbed wire. . . . And so what happened was they hadn't been maintained. So damn near every canal over there was choked with these large reeds. These things were probably 10, 12 feet high. So we spent an inordinate amount of money, an inordinate amount of time, working with the Iraqis, and the Iraqis used some of their resources also to go back and start clearing canals. . . .

I don't know what the final number was, but we cleared thousands of kilometers of canals, again, as part and parcel, so now you can get the water to the fields, and then to the local farmers. And then, working with the appropriate ag specialists, and we had some folks from Texas A&M come in; . . . they'd sit down with the local farmers, [from] trying to develop co-ops to how they could go to an end-to-end process. Again, it goes back to 40 years of you were given seed by Baghdad, and you planted. The government bought your product, and it just repeated. No initiative, per se, open market where if you could try something different and go and basically take your product and sell it for the best price, because you always got the price. So, again, their mindset was, hey, if I can sell it, the government will buy it, and I'll be okay. Trying to step into a free market sector and, again, I'm not an economist or an agriculture specialist, but try and get them to understand. They got it.

Quite frankly, the younger generation over there gets it. The ones that are in their 20s and 30s, who haven't been so ingrained by the past, will turn this country around. The guys who are my age, in their 50s and 60s, who have been there, their whole life was driven by [the] top-down [system], from Saddam [Hussein], here's how we do business, then, well, trying to break them [out of the past] and get them to see a different way. . . . From a governance and economic standpoint, what we try to do is, working with the governor, working with the provincial council, working with all the city mayors, try to develop a process, sector by sector, and again, have them establish priorities. It's tough for them to grasp. Hey, this is all broke. Well, okay, great. You've got 10 things that are broke, what's number 1 and what's number 10? Just like we do. That's the same thing that we do in the States, and sometimes you don't like it. So that was a process that we had to kind of ingrain in them, and they're figuring it out, and it'll be a slow, it'll be a continued, hopefully a positive trend over here in the next several years as they continue to work. . . .

I had not been to Anbar Province before. So I didn't have an expectation, whereas some guys who had been there, like General Kelly had been there previously, had seen the darker days, and gone back. It was a startling difference. . . . When II MEF left, II MEF had lost 90 Marines in combat operations in a year, in their year there. In the year we were there, we lost 22 in combat operations. We lost some other Marines in noncombat. But if that's the scale, that is some scale, 90 to 22. So we weren't fighting, and most of our casualties were IEDs [improvised explosive devices], losing Devil Dogs [troops] in vehicles, for the most part. Some onesies and twosies, a couple of other situations, but primarily in vehicles.

We very rarely ever started a shot first. We did offensive operations, we did some operations up in the desert. We ran a lot of guys down in the wadis and so forth, but at the end of the day, I think offensively, we didn't shoot any artillery the whole time we were there, not a single round. We did some illum[ination]. That was about the extent of it. I think we might have done four to five missions, with aircraft, when we actually got hold of some bad guys running around a desert. . . . But really, the offensive, kinetic operations, [while] we were there,

really we mounted pretty much nothing. We were still being proactive, but it was just less and less and less, the entire year through 2008, which obviously was a good thing.

And again, it goes back to—you talk to the Iraqis—when we first got there, . . . security was still the number-one priority—security, security, security. When we left, if you asked them what their problems were, the first five things weren't security. It was not enough power, we need to fix the schools. . . .

What we did when we first got there in April, . . . the MEF was at Camp Fallujah. I moved my G-9, our CMO [civil-military operations], to Ramadi and collocated it with the PRT, for two reasons. One was, it needed to be there, because if we're going to do a single effort, you can't have two entities out there running around doing things, not connected. And we built a joint common plan with them that basically was signed by General Kelly and Mr. James [V.] Soriano, who was the PRT lead, saying basically, "These are our priorities, and this is what we're going to do," kind of the first step. And we worked that over the summer.

At the same time, and again, I'll give you a couple of the challenges that we saw going in. One challenge was we were going to have to shift the security file to the Iraqis, provincial PIC, provincial Iraqi control. We were supposed to do that; actually, we were supposed to do that in March-April when we first got there. They weren't ready. We ended up doing it 1 September. It took about 60 days because of some political stuff in Baghdad on the Iraqi side, not necessarily on the Coalition side. That was a big deal, . . . and that was kind of a mindset change for them to say, okay, that's not our problem anymore. You've got a problem, that's yours to solve, whether it be the police, whether it be the Iraqi army. But that was a good step to kind of get their feet on the ground.

Then the next piece of this thing was the elections. Now, the elections were supposed to go in October. They got slid because of political maneuvering in Baghdad, but that was really the next iteration of where they kind of are really standing on their own two feet. And just when we left, and it was within days of us leaving, they had over 300,000 Sunnis vote in al-Anbar Province, where

they had 3,000 vote in the first election. These people were ready. They knew they screwed it up. In hindsight, you're always smarter. They didn't vote the first time around, so they looked at the elected officials who were running the province as, "You weren't elected." But it's like, well, hey, tough. The ones that voted, we're working. Somebody's got to do the job. So it'll be an interesting year. We were hoping to be there through the transition, where we started the new provincial council, the new governor, just to see all that work. And of course, II MEF is going through that right now as we speak, which is nothing but goodness.

At the same time, in the fall, and basically in October, we did something in Iraq that no other province had done, or no other MND [multinational division] or MNF [multinational force] had done. We basically put the PRT in the lead for all governance and economics, and several reasons for that, but really the fundamental reason was, at the end of the day—and this is probably my biggest complaint of how things ran in Iraq, proper—was you can't have two cooks in the kitchen. It's the fundamental view, there can't be two bosses. It doesn't work. So if you took a look at Baghdad, you had Department of State, you had the embassy. In the embassy, they had an economic section, and then they had the OPA, which is the Office of Provincial Authority, which the [call] still was in the embassy, who all the PRTs worked through. Yes, you had engineers, another organization called ITAO, which is Iraq transition [assistance] office, who worked—actually, it was a surrogate for the embassy, and they kind of did engineering-type stuff. And then you had MNF-West [Multi National Force-West], you had MNF-Iraq [Multi National Force-Iraq], MNC-I [Multi National Corps-Iraq], Corps, and they all had their hands in reconstruction and that type of thing.

So if you took a look at how the U.S. government was doing this, it was [messed] up. You had all these different people, all great Americans, all wanting to do the right thing, but in my opinion, not a single guy or gal in charge who said, "This is the way we're going to go," and make it go. The challenges there were—which you would expect—is you had to work through multiple agencies in Baghdad to get things done. Okay, fine. You figured out who the players were,

and you made it work. I won't go through the iteration on that. But what we decided to do was, hey, if we're going to talk the talk, then let's walk the walk. So what we did was, we went to the PRT and said, Jim [Soriano], "We're going to give you the lead on all these things. What talent do you want?" I had about, oh, 35, 40 folks working for me in the G-9, CMO. Actually, the number was higher than that, but there were a lot of enlisted kids driving and so forth, but really, the nuts-and-bolts guys that were doing the stuff. Jim was going to handle about 45 folks in the PRT-ish ballpark, so I said, "What talent do you need from us?" And so they came up with about 15 folks, and I gave 15 Marines to the PRT, in different disciplines, with different expertise. And then they didn't work for me anymore. They worked for Jim Soriano, worked for the PRT.

[Notes that the new organizational structure "caused a hell of a lot of consternation in Baghdad," particularly when they told people, "Don't talk to us, talk to PRT. They've got this. They now are the lead for Anbar Province."]

The interesting thing is, when we went up and briefed this concept, the ambassador said, "This is the best thing I've seen. This is the way we ought to be doing business in Iraq," kind of the one-guy-in-charge type thing. Candidly, if I was given the mission to go do this and start over again, knowing what I know, is I would have put the reconstruction czar under the DoD [Department of Defense], and I would have taken all the smart, appropriate DoS [Department of State] folks, whether it be the ag folks or all the different folks who were out there, and put them in one organization under DoD. Because, quite frankly, whether you like it or not, is the culture of DoD, we can get things done, where the culture of DoS, different culture, God love them to death. It just is what is what it is. . . .

The other thing we did during 2008, we started weaning them off of Coalition force capacity. For example, the governor never went anywhere without the Coalition force taking him, never went anywhere—to Baghdad, to a city, to go to work in the morning. And, candidly, as you well imagine, when he first got the job, they were fighting; he was fighting to get into work and fighting to go

home every day, during the bad days. At some point we told the governor, in the late summer, "Governor, we're not going to do this anymore for you. You're going to go to work. You had your own PSD [personal security detail], [should have] trained your guys in your own PSD. If you want to go to Baghdad, governor, you've got to get yourself to Baghdad. Now, if there's something we need to go up there with specifically, sure, we'll fly in." And we did fly him a couple of times for key meetings and so forth.

So what we tried to do, under our watch over there, when we were dealing with the Iraqis, was to try to take a step back and say, "You guys start doing this." . . . We had to minimize our footprint. We had to get out of the cities, and that's where we go back into rehabbing all the things that we broke, and all the facilities we hadn't maintained, and go refurbish them and so forth as we pulled out.

The ECPs [entry control points] [were a] big deal. I mean, that's how you control the people going in and out of Fallujah. We turned the ECPs over to the Iraqis, [but] we waited until they asked us to do that. After the security arrangement, after we did provincial Iraqi control on 1 September, it was about two months later that they came to us and [said], "Hey, we're ready to take the ECPs." . . .

So our year, . . . we predominantly closed the deal on the security side, continued to do the training with the police, training with the border patrol, the border forces. The Iraqi army was really in pretty good shape. The commitment the Marine Corps had made to transition teams, TTs, years ago, paid off. I mean, the 1st and 7th Divisions were the best two divisions in the Iraqi army, and it showed, because they pulled them and went to Basrah. They went to Diyala, they went to Mosul with those divisions, and they kicked ass, operating unilaterally, with Marine Corps TTs with them.

Quite frankly, the biggest compliment the Marine Corps ever got was when they had that little dustup in Basrah, and they sent the 1st Division down there, and we sent our TTs with them. The British commander . . . said, "Hey, the only reason that Basrah didn't fall was because of the Marines." Now of course you can imagine the Army guys almost fell out of their chair. What he meant was, the 1st Division was so good, and having the Marine

TTs with them, they came in there, they were just astounded how good they were, because their division, the 14th Division, the one in Basrah, was the one that just fell apart, ran away. So the Marine Corps over the years spent an inordinate bill with TTs and [getting] the right people in there, and so the 1st and 7th Division were extraordinary divisions. . . . They were the best in Iraq. . . .

The police matured substantially in 2008, probably have a couple more years really to go, but they basically now have the confidence to manage the security, the civil capacity, civil governance, in the cities and making that work.

The last thing that we were working on to try to close the deal was the professionalism of the border forces. . . . We're trying to increase the resources and logistics of the border forces so they can be a better entity, if you would, for the whole makeup.

So, on the security side, when we basically turned it over to II MEF, [we] said, "Listen, they've got it." . . . I think in another month or two, they're going to be down to three maneuver battalions in Anbar Province from when we were there. It was 14 when we first got there. So, again, you can see, a lot of things had changed.





Interview 19

***Transition to Iraqi Control, Part III***

## **Mr. James V. Soriano**

*Provincial Reconstruction Team Leader  
U.S. Department of State*

September 2006 to Present (as of mid-2009)

Mr. James V. Soriano is a career U.S. Department of State Foreign Service officer with 25 years of experience. He has served in various capacities at the U.S. embassies in Yemen, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, and India. He had previously worked in Iraq in 2003-2004 as the senior Coalition civilian official in al-Muthanna Province under the Coalition Provisional Authority. Soriano returned to Iraq in September 2006 as the leader of a 60-person provincial reconstruction team in al-Anbar Province. He followed Mr. John Kael Weston, who worked closely with Marines in Iraq from 2004 through mid-2006.

As the provincial reconstruction team leader, Soriano worked with Multi National Force-West building capacity in al-Anbar's provincial government, private sector, and civil societies. In this interview, he details the team's structure and its relationships with Marines and Iraqis. He describes arriving in al-Anbar during the height of the insurgency as the Awakening movement in Ramadi was beginning and explains how the Awakening progressed from an anti-al-Qaeda security movement into a political party.

Mr. Soriano was interviewed by Colonel Gary W. Montgomery and Chief Warrant Officer-4 Timothy S. McWilliams on 13 February 2009 at Camp Ramadi, Iraq.

**Chief Warrant Officer-4 Timothy S. McWilliams:** Please tell us a little bit about yourself and the provincial reconstruction teams [PRTs].

**Mr. James V. Soriano:** I arrived in Iraq in September of 2006, so I've been here in Anbar Province heading up the Provincial Reconstruction Team for the last two years and five months now. There are four PRTs in Anbar. Three of them are embedded at the regimental level [ePRTs], and the one I lead [provincial level within Ramadi], which is now about 60 people, combined military-civilian, at the provincial level.

We are partnered with the MEF [Marine expeditionary force] headquarters. My counterpart is the deputy commanding general, [Brigadier General] John [E.] Wissler. This new MEF that just came in, II MEF, which just arrived just a few days ago, is the fourth MEF I've worked with, . . . so I've seen a lot of changes since September '06.

I arrived in the height of the insurgency [and] was initially stationed at Camp Blue Diamond in Ramadi. There was very little to do in Ramadi at that time because of the insurgency and the kinetics. So I moved myself over to Camp Fallujah, which is where the flagpole is [MNF-W headquarters], and I sort of embedded myself, if I could put it that way, with the MEF staff until the spring of '07 [because] there was very little to do here in Ramadi.

I couldn't get out. We couldn't engage the provincial government. The purpose of a PRT, as you know, is capacity building. That's our job. And my Iraqi counterparts—I just told you about my Marine counterpart—is the governor [Mamoun Sami Rashid al-Alwani], the provincial council chairman [Abu Abdul Salam], the provincial council, and then my staff engages the directors of the various departments—sewage, water, electricity, and so forth.

The PRT's activities rest on three legs, I would say. One would be capacity building with the provincial government. The other is encouraging the private sector. We've got some activities there. And the third would be civil society, trying to encourage civil society organizations, such as a farmers' co-op we're trying to set up, and so on. We were active very recently, in the last several days, with having NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] do a voter awareness campaign during the recent provincial council election in January of '09.

As I said, when I first arrived, there was heavy fighting. The high point of the battle, if I recall correctly from the graphs, was November of '06. After November '06, the graph of monthly security incidents starts to trail down, and by the spring of '07, it falls out then. It just heads due south. At this time, the provincial council of Anbar fled Ramadi. Actually, it fled in March of '06, as I recall, before I arrived. There was a sustained attack on the

government center, [a] 24-hour attack that Marines [who] were based there [had] to beat it off. But the council decided to pull up stakes, and they moved to the relative safety of Baghdad, where there were some secure areas for Sunnis. Even there, it was a touch-and-go situation for Sunnis. The council met ad hoc in Baghdad [but] did not disband. . . .

Only the governor kept normal office hours at the government center in Ramadi, in downtown Ramadi, surrounded by a company of Marines. When I first met him at his office, I think it was the last week of September of '06. There was a gun battle right outside on the street, RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades] were going off, and a few months later, his office where we were having that meeting was destroyed by I guess a rocket or a mortar. That was December of '06. The government center was a shambles. It was a war zone, it was a battlefield. When I got there, we could run between buildings with full PPE [personal protective equipment] and crouching down and all of that. Today, we just walk around in shirtsleeves.

The council fled to Baghdad, where they met infrequently, and I would have to say that its only contact with Americans during those days was with a USAID [United States Agency for International Development] contractor called RTI, Research Triangle Institute, which was doing capacity building with provincial councils around the country. They have a campus in the IZ [international zone in Baghdad]. RTI and several of the leaders of the provincial council were regulars there, and, practically speaking, their early contact with Americans was through RTI through those dark days of the spring, summer, fall of '06. The council moved back to Ramadi slowly, in stages, in the spring of '07. The Marines flew them out by helicopter back to Ramadi. They landed at Blue Diamond, and we had a few meetings on Camp Blue Diamond. The Anbaris didn't like that. They didn't like the appearance of needing American military protection to meet the guys on the council. They did that in April, May, June of '07.

By July '07, they moved back to the government center in Ramadi and returned to their traditional seat of power. By August of '07, the ground floor of the government center, where the governor has his

office, was repaired using CERP [Commander's Emergency Relief Program] funds. The upper floor was still a shambles. (It's a two-story structure.) And [the governor] began to have normal business hours. They [Iraqis] started coming in looking for services in September, October of '07. Women and children were crawling all over the place, looking for assistance with their various petitions and needs with the government.

When I arrived, of course, the Awakening was an early phenomenon in September '06. I think it started in Anbar in about September 13th, '06, after some false starts earlier that year in '06, in which al-Qaeda apparently beat back an earlier attempt by the Ramadi sheikhs to form an anti-al-Qaeda coalition.

Sheikhs cooperating with the Coalition was nothing new. It happened first of all in al-Qaim, but that was a localized phenomenon. It didn't travel very far, and it was due mostly for economic reasons, because al-Qaeda was encroaching upon their trans-border smuggling business. In Ramadi, Sheikh Sattar Abu Risha and a group of like-minded sheikhs got together, formed a coalition; earlier it was called the Anbar Salvation Council, [then] the Anbar Awakening Council. The latter phrase, Anbar Awakening Council, still exists and is a political party not associated with the Abu Rishas. It is associated with someone else who was a founding member. Many founding members, maybe two dozen or three dozen local sheikhs and notables.

Abu Risha, Sheikh Sattar, I saw him many times. I shared meals with him many times. He had the utmost contempt for the Iraqi Islamic Party and contempt for any political party that had a religious basis or a foundation. He became a media phenomenon almost immediately, and this was September '06. By November, October in '06, he was badgering the provincial council, which was in Baghdad, for seats for representation. The election for the provincial council took place in January of '05. It was widely boycotted. The mosques called for boycott, and you know the story—3,700 votes were cast in a huge province, and the IIP or Iraqi Islamic Party was the one that won the right to form the council and control.

By the fall of '06, that became intolerable to the Awakening sheikhs, Sattar and his fellow travelers there, and they felt that they stood and fought. The council fled. There was a sense of entitlement. There was a sense of contempt because they were religiously based. He went on TV many times. Sattar started a media campaign against corrupt government, absentee government, and all of the rest. [Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Kamil Mohammed Hassan al-] Maliki intervened in early November of '06. He sent Dr. Rafe al-Essawi, who was a cabinet minister in those days, but today he's a deputy prime minister from Fallujah. He had him broker a deal, which was brokered at the Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad, in which the IIP, the governing party, agreed to expand the number of seats on the council from 40 to 48 and gave the additional seats to the Awakening. They had another person on the council that was sympathetic to them, so they had nine votes out of 48. That was the situation that existed, nine out of 48, throughout the next two years, until there was just an election a few days ago, basically.

Sattar certainly sent al-Qaeda on the run. By winter of '06, early '07 I should say, it was clear that the battlefield had tipped in our favor, that his phenomenon did travel, as opposed to the early one in al-Qaim that was imitated in other provinces. However, his leadership was basically localized to Ramadi. It never really got very much beyond Ramadi, and I think when we did the analysis of the last election, I think most of the votes that his group has gotten will come from Ramadi. There are probably several of the tribes that are sort of associated with him, and they probably gave him the bulk of the votes earned. It would be surprising to me if the Awakening sheikh—since [Sattar] was killed later—if his brother, Ahmad Abu Risha, was able to get a lot of votes outside of Ramadi. It's not a bad place to be, because Ramadi is the most populous city, has the most votes, so strategically, it's a well-orchestrated political campaign. He was pretty much in a pretty good position because he got a lot of votes where most of the people live.

By the spring of '07, Sattar launched an attack-and-withdrawal kind of approach against the provincial council, turning up the heat, usually through a media campaign and complaints about

corruption and malfeasance and so forth, always with the intention of getting more seats or increasing his power-sharing agreement to his favor. The governor's position at this time was precarious. We all thought that Sattar was after the governor's chair, to get him kicked out. Mamoun Sami Rashid, as I just said earlier, was the only government official who actually maintained office hours during the dark days of '06, survived many assassination attempts. [He] thought that Sattar wanted him out. I was at an Iftar dinner, hosted by General Zilmer at Camp Fallujah. This would be October '06, at which Sattar and the governor were invited. And it was a very unpleasant dinner. . . .

As a compromise, the governor agreed to take on a deputy governor who would be named by Sattar Abu Risha. He was, as you know, supported by the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, under then-Colonel Sean [B.] MacFarland [USA], now General MacFarland, and then later, after March of '07, by the 1/3 BCT [1st Brigade Combat Team, 3d Infantry] with Colonel John [W.] Charlton [USA]. They parked an M1 Abrams tank right outside the front door of Sattar's compound and residence, right outside Camp Ramadi here, within eyesight for many months. It was taken away finally in October of '07.

So through the spring of '07, Sattar was keeping his pressure on. At that time, the deputy commanding general, General John [R.] Allen and I [went] to broker a cease-fire of words, if you will, with the governor and Sattar Abu Risha and a lot of other sheikhs, a lot of shouting going on. And we sort of kept the lid on. Meanwhile, the battlefield was tipping into our favor throughout this period of time, and by the summer of '07, as I said, the provincial council returned to its normal seat of power and business returned to normal.

In September of '07, President [George W.] Bush visited and called on Prime Minister Maliki, the governor, and several sheikhs, including Sattar Abu Risha [at Al Asad air base]. Seven days later, Abu Risha was killed by a bomb planted on his compound, as he was apparently moving from his horse stable back to his residence. There was a roadside bomb, and I was downtown in Ramadi. I was at the government center, actually, and we heard the windows rattle,

and we saw a plume of smoke and we didn't understand what it was until we got back to base. I went to the funeral. You can imagine who was there. General [Raymond T.] Odierno [USA] was there. At the time, he was the MNC-I commander. Many hundreds, hundreds or thousands of mourners were there.

At this time, I had organized a visit to the United States for the so-called Anbar eight, as I called them. This was the governor, the provincial council chairman, I wanted Sattar Abu Risha to join [us], and I got the provincial council chairman as well to agree with it, and he chose Mayor Latif [Obaid Ayadah of Ramadi]. So there were two members of the Awakening on that delegation, four from the IIP, and two independents. One was the governor and then his deputy governor. Governor Mamoun has IIP roots, but after he took office, I think in '05, he professed to govern in a nonpartisan way. The assassination created a vacancy on this delegation.\*

This is an International Visitor [Leadership] Program. It was two weeks in the States. I accompanied them. General Allen accompanied them. We did a week in Washington. Sheikh Sattar's older brother, Ahmad Abu Risha, took over the wings of leadership of the Awakening and was added to the delegation. We called on the president in October or early November of '07, Secretary [Robert M.] Gates at DoD [Department of Defense], Secretary [of State Condoleezza] Rice. We did many calls to Capitol Hill. We flew down to Houston, Texas. We met the president's father [George H.W. Bush] down there and flew back up to Vermont. I think we were in Montpelier, and there was a National Guard unit that had served in Ramadi. . . . Throughout that visit, the behavior of all participants was, of course, in my presence, it was very proper, and polite. Perhaps behind my back, there was a lot of backbiting between them. . . .

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\*The eight members of the delegation were Mamoun Sami Rashid al-Alwani, provincial governor of al-Anbar Province; Dr. Abdulsalam Abdullah al-Ani, the provincial council chairman; Ahmad Bezia Fteikhan al-Rishawi, Satter Abu Risha's brother; Latif O. Ayada, mayor of Ramadi; Dr. Othman Hummadi, vice governor for planning; Dr. Ashour Hamid Saleh, a member of the provincial council and the Islamic Iraqi Party's top official in the province; Dr. Zekei Obaid Fayad, a provincial council member and the Islamic Iraqi Party leader in Fallujah; and Dr. Rafe al-Essawi, the minister of state for foreign affairs.

From New York, we went to Amman, Jordan, in November '07, and we had a week there for a workshop, organized by this USAID contractor I referred to a moment ago, RTI, and my staff. And the upshot of that workshop was to draft a provincial development strategy. We broke down into working groups, and the RTI guy paid the bills. It was over at the Marriot Hotel in Amman. They invited about 120 Anbaris, and about that many showed up. We had about 120, so that was the provincial council plus. And they invited—this is IIP, now; they're the ones who are giving us the guest list, the participants' list comes from the IIP, and they gave us a list of the Awakening folks to invite, too. It was supposed to be all inclusive, a joint effort, by Anbaris, to draft an economic vision statement of their own future in the immediate aftermath of an insurgency. The exercise was well worth it. The final product was kind of badly written, but the exercise of bringing people together was worth it. . . .

Ahmad Abu Risha transformed the Awakening from what was a counterinsurgency security organization, a wartime ally of us. Through the spring of '08, he transformed it into a political party, and that's when our relationship with him sort of changed. About April, May, they registered the Awakening as a political party. The tank in front of his house and the daily U.S. military engagement with him ceased. The tank was taken away I think in October '07, just before we went to the U.S. We just can't choose sides among political parties, the U.S. government can't, and certainly the U.S. military ought to stay out of such kind of activities. By the spring of '08, they changed the Awakening into a political party, registered it. He has offices in other provinces of dubious connection to his own organization.\*

A lot of groups around the country call themselves Awakenings, and I tell visitors that there are a lot of awakenings in Iraq, but only one Awakening with a capital "A," and that's the one in Ramadi. The others are sort of awakenings localized. If they want to use that term, that's up to them. But the press also falls into the trap, as I've

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\* Since Satter Abu Risha's death, especially since Ahmad Abu Risha turned the Awakening into a political party, many of the original Awakening sheikhs have disengaged from the group.

written in my State Department reports, of characterizing Ahmad Abu Risha as the leader of the Sunni Awakening, giving the false impression that the Sunni Awakening is a monolithic thing. There's no such thing. And if there is such a thing, it's under the leadership of Ahmad Abu Risha, which there's no such thing. It's a double fallacy. . . .

**Colonel Gary W. Montgomery:** Was the Awakening something that had coordination, or was it just people being moved in the same direction by the sweep of events?

**Soriano:** I think the latter is a good way of describing it, tribes moving in the same direction because of the sweep of events, and I think I mentioned some time ago that there was an earlier alliance of tribes out of al-Qaim with the Coalition, but it was localized, as I said. It didn't go beyond al-Qaim. What made the Awakening of Ramadi more distinct was it was really the turning. In al-Qaim, it did not really turn the battlefield, as such. The battle was still raging, and the worst was yet to come in terms of fighting.

The Awakening in Ramadi was somewhat different, and it had different characteristics. In al-Qaim, I don't think the youths of the place moved forward to join the police force. Part of Sheikh Sattar's strategy was to encourage the youth of the place to join the police. When I arrived in the middle of '06, police recruitment drives would attract a dozen or so kids. By the spring of '07, there were more recruits than there were places at the academy to train them. Much of that was due to the change of attitude by the tribal sheikhs in the Ramadi area, which then spread. Youths of other tribes along the river began to join the police force, perhaps by the sweep of events that you just mentioned. But there was no monolithic movement. The Awakening was, is, and perhaps will be always a localized Ramadi phenomenon. The big tribe to the west is the Abu Nimer, and they are definitely not Awakening. They have an agenda, and they are our wartime allies as well. To the east of Fallujah, the city is least tribal, in many respects, and it's an area, as many people would say, of IIP sympathy, rather than the Awakening.

**Montgomery:** Is that more in political terms?

**Soriano:** Political terms, sympathies, yeah, looking for leadership. The idea of pan-tribal politics really has to be examined. The dynamic of tribal politics implies that no one leader shall get too strong. But I think that's what's going on. Ahmad Abu Risha has reached that point. Tribal engagement is what the Marines did out here and the Army did out here in Anbar, and it was certainly a necessary tactic of the insurgency. And by tribal engagement, I mean a day-to-day meeting on a face-to-face basis at the battalion and the company level of localized sheikhs, using CERP [Commander's Emergency Relief Program] funds to lubricate a more productive relationship with those sheikhs and getting the sheikhs to get off the fence. Sheikhs are not leaders. Sheikhs are followers. Some would say sheikhs are cowards. They follow opinion. They do not lead opinion. Many of them fled to Jordan. Some of them were asked to go to Jordan by their own people, for their own safety.

It was a combination of four factors that led to the tipping of the battlefield in our favor. The first was a change of public opinion in '06-'07 in which there was a redefinition of the enemy. We were no longer seen as the enemy, but as a friend, and al-Qaeda was no longer seen as a defender, but as an enemy. [The second] was a tribal engagement, the day-to-day tea drinking with a lot of local notables to get them to come off the fence and onto our side. The third was police recruitment, which is perhaps the most important factor of them all. There are now, what, 28,000 police in the province? When I arrived here, there were fewer than 6,000 on the rolls, but hardly any on the streets. And that filled the void. After the downfall of Saddam [Hussein], a void was created, and the bad guys floated in the void. And the fourth was the effectiveness of our combined operations, in all of its aspects, combined ISF [Iraqi security forces] and Coalition force operations, police operations, army operations, special teams that went after the bad guys and just eliminated them one by one. Those were important.

Even population control measures were part of that. I think the lesson learned there is the population in an insurgency will tolerate a certain amount of inconvenience, of population control measures, of barricades, entry points, and so forth, provided that the

counterinsurgent also has to provide some measure of security at the end of the struggle. So he has to keep up his end of the bargain. You have to have a vehicle curfew for many hours a day. At the end of the day, if you want to put it that way, the security has to be restored. So those are I think the four big ones, the change of public opinion and the role of the mosque, by the way. It's something you don't even understand in public opinion. In '05, they were calling for insurrection. By '06, they were calling for moderation. By '09, they were telling the people to get out and vote. The change in public opinion, tribal engagement as a tool, police recruitment, and effectiveness of military operations.

**Montgomery:** You said that the sheikhs don't create public opinion, they follow it. But you also said that Sheikh Sattar had a strategy of getting the young men involved in the police force, which if it was his strategy, they were following him to some degree. I always had the impression that the tribes and the sheikhs were similar to feudalism, sort of a mutual contract. The sheikh helps gets jobs and benefits for the people who follow him, and in return, they do follow him, and it increases his influence. So it was sort of like feudalism without coercion.

**Soriano:** You're right. The point I wanted to make is that, by and large, tribal leaders are not leaders. They tend to be followers. I guess what I was trying to capture in that sentence is that most Iraqis hold tribal leaders in contempt, because of the feudal aspect that you just mentioned. It just reminds them of a way of life that is archaic in many respects. If you like a society where the destiny of a woman is decided before the time she's 14 years old, you'll love a tribal society like rural Iraq.

**Montgomery:** So is that why the rest of Iraq holds them out as the Wild West Anbar Province?

**Soriano:** Obviously, all of Iraq has some aspects of tribalism left, and the secret that is not said openly is that the people, when they go to the polls, prefer government by technocrats and not by tribal leaders. That's pretty clear. As a matter of fact, Ahmad Abu Risha, who did well at the polls, also has a party yoked to him and his coalition that is technocratic in nature and has links to the university.

The issue of tribal engagement [is] something I don't think the U.S. forces understood in '03 when we entered here, and perhaps we mistreated tribal leaders and didn't show them sufficient respect or understand their role. Tribal engagement had a very important role to play in turning the battle in our favor, by bringing [in] these fence-sitters. "My God, the Americans are here. Let's jump on the bandwagon with them"—that didn't happen. It took some persuasion to get that to happen, and they—the tribal leaders—had to see that the battlefield was tipping in our favor, Sattar Abu Risha being the exception. And the reason why he stands out so much is because he is an exception. He was a leader. I can't take that away from the guy. But others, where he stands, there's 20, 30, 40 behind him that are fence sitters. Once we Americans discovered the the force multiplier effect of tribal engagement, we jumped all over it and . . . tried to have other MNDs [multinational divisions] do what was done in Anbar to replicate the success we have here.

All of that is true historically, and the reason we did tribal engagement, as I said, is really to get the tribal leader to prevent his teenagers from planting bombs against American teenagers. Basically, that's what it pointed down to. Get your kids to stop planting IEDs for \$200. Al-Qaeda pays them whatever, and then they blow our kids up. That's true. We did get them to stop that, but tribal engagement by itself never explained why the first teenager planted the first bomb. If the counterinsurgent believes that the tribal leader is strong enough to influence his teenagers, why did the first teenager plant the first bomb? The answer is that the tribal system has been under stress for decades, for generations. The tribal way of life is being pulled apart by the forces of modernity and globalization, and even literacy. Making a woman read and write is a threat to a tribal way of life, to be quite honest with you. That was being torn apart.

The former regime runs into hiding, they're thrown out, a vacuum is created. We foolishly stand around with our hands in our pockets, and into that vacuum flow Islamic radicals. After that, chaos breaks out, and when you're in a situation like that, people really fell back on this primordial social structure of the tribe for protection. At that point, we went to the tribal leaders, and they said, "We need, first of all, security and protection."

Somebody has to write the study on the limits of tribal engagement. Marines get a full chapter in the next manual on counterinsurgency on tribal engagement. Their experience in Anbar Province is a textbook example of how to do it right. There's a limit to tribal engagement, and that is in the post-conflict period. The logic of continuing to engage tribal leaders is opposite of that of capacity building for a legitimate structure of government, or a modern structure of government, I should say.

We've got RCT [regimental combat team] commanders in the field today who would love to get some CERP money and do a sweetheart deal with this sheikh and that sheikh to buy off their goodwill. CERP ought to be used by the commander for goodwill, sweetheart deals favoring this sheikh or that sheikh. But that act itself, the sweetheart deal, is an American version of the corruption that Iraqis themselves are fed up with. . . . But it's understandable. We do it to save lives, our own kids, okay? And there's nothing we can do, just to get out of here as fast as we can, find a way of exiting, spread around one last go-around of play money to the sheikhs, if you will, say thank you very much, we've been here six, seven years, it's time for us to go home. . . .

The Marines got it. I mean, General [John F.] Kelly knew. He understood, he saw what had to be done, when it had to be done. You engage tribes, you beat the enemy. When the enemy is beaten, then you've got to do civil capacity. The tribes are still there. You still have to have some sort of engagement with them, but they're not necessarily the future. . . . What I saw in '06 was very impressive and was the model for other MNDs to follow. You guys found the key. You had a key, a force multiplier, with a little CERP money on that. There's nothing wrong with it. I'm not condemning that. That's fine, at a certain stage, when you're fighting a war. But, as time goes on, you've got to make adjustments.



Interview 20

***Transition to Iraqi Control, Part IV***

## **Ms. Carol J. Wilson**

### *Al-Anbar Provincial Representative United States Agency for International Development*

August 2008 to August 2009

Ms. Carol J. Wilson arrived in al-Anbar Province as the provincial representative for the United States Agency for International Development [USAID] in August 2008. After growing up on a farm in Iowa, she earned degrees from Iowa State University and the University of Virginia. She participated in international development as a Peace Corps volunteer before joining the U.S. Department of Agriculture, managing projects in India, Thailand, and Europe during her 10 years with that department. After serving more than 10 years with USAID, Ms. Wilson first went to Iraq in July 2006, working in the agency's Baghdad office to provide technical support and to design an agricultural program that would support the provincial reconstruction teams and help Iraqi farmers gain better access to overseas markets. Following that assignment, she went to Afghanistan for a year before returning to Iraq.

In this interview, Ms. Wilson describes the economic and agriculture programs that USAID has been providing to Iraqis to help revitalize their economic and agricultural sectors.

Ms. Wilson was interviewed by Colonel Gary W. Montgomery and Chief Warrant Officer-4 Timothy S. McWilliams on 13 February 2009 at Camp Ramadi, Iraq.

**Chief Warrant Officer-4 Timothy S. McWilliams:** Since last August [2008] when you arrived, can you give us an idea of the scope of work that you're doing?

**Ms. Carol J. Wilson:** As the USAID [United States Agency for International Development] rep, I started out at the embedded PRT [provincial reconstruction team]. . . . We have four projects here in Ramadi. One is the Community Stabilization Program. We have a micro-plans institution here called al-Taqaddum, which is

part of a [Tejar] program. We have the Inma\* program that is stimulating the mushroom factory and a little bit of other technical assistance here, and then we have what we call the Iraq Program, the Iraq Rapid Assistance Program [IRAP], which is designed to be a flexible grant program, similar to CERP [Commander's Emergency Response Project] funds, and we have access to funding on what we do, I guess immediate-term type of assistance.

So it's my job just to oversee them, make sure that they do some oversight, just make sure that the project is going in the right way, provide some guidance to the team members on what type of programs or proposals they may develop, try to shape it so you don't have a negative impact. You may do a short-term fix but have a negative impact on the long term, so we're trying to make sure that we don't do that inadvertently. There are times when we may make a decision that's strategic, and you say, "Well, we really do need to fix this right now." But I think that if you do that, you still need to know if there's going to be adverse effects in the long term, so you can take action to correct that.

**Colonel Gary W. Montgomery:** How do you determine that—if it will have an adverse impact in the long term?

**Wilson:** Some things we just know. Like, for example, giving out grant money to people, if you go in and it's right after a battle, and you want to get people back on their feet, it's a good thing. But if you keep continuing to give out that money, then you completely disrupt any financial system. Nobody will be looking at taking loans and looking at making longer-term investments and making a business so they can pay it back, give back a loan. Instead, what you'll see now is people just coming to us, asking for money, just constantly wanting the money and thinking that we're just going to fix whatever it is that gets broken because we've been here fixing things for so long that they're just completely used to that, and probably thinking, "Why spend my own money, why take a loan, when I can get the Americans to pay for it?"

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\* Inma is an Arabic word that means growth.

So that's the sort of thing where we know that's what's going to happen. We've had experiences in other countries. We know that that's what's going to happen, but it's the amount of time that you do it. So that's where we're at now, trying to stop the grant programs and get it into more of a normal development-assistance type of program, working with banking systems, working with financial institutions.

Getting people to pay for services, that's another example. People were wanting as part of the stabilization program, offering training programs to people, whether it be English, computer training, sewing, business training, whatever it may be. It may be well intentioned to provide the people with a stipend, transportation costs, etc., but what that does is then ruin any efforts of trying to make a business center or a training center sustainable by charging fees, because nobody's going to want to pay the fee, because they've always gotten that paid for. So that's the sort of thing we're trying to grapple with right now. They're just so used to getting things paid for that if we offer a class and just say you have to pay your own transportation, we have people who say, "No thank you. If you're not going to pay my transportation, I don't want to go." So then you have to say, "Well, then, why should we offer the class? If you're not willing to come and even bring yourself to it, let alone pay a fee for it, then why should we offer that class?"

**McWilliams:** You listed four programs. Could you describe those?

**Wilson:** Yes, the Community Stabilization Program, CSP, a lot of people here refer to it as IRD. IRD is our implementing program, International Relief and Development. The Community Stabilization Program was designed back in 2006. It got underway in 2007, and it was done in collaboration with the military as part of the counterinsurgency program. CSP has three areas they work on: infrastructure; economic growth and youth; and business development services. As part of the economic growth and youth program, they have some vocational training programs. All of it was really oriented toward employment generation, so it was getting people back to work. Even the infrastructure programs were about getting people back to work, and then the vocational training

was to teach them the skills they may need for the infrastructure projects—masonry or bricklaying, masonry stuff, carpentry, other types of skills.

And then the business development services, what we did with our grants program, AID did support a grants program, but along with that, we included business development training. So the person would go through a training program on how to run a business, get the grant, and then three months later, they'd come back for a refresher course—after running the business for three months—on marketing and other ways to make your accounting practices, make your business more profitable. And so then they would do follow-up visits and checks on the business. We would also do direct procurement, rather than just giving them the money directly, where if they had whatever type of store, then we would buy the product for them that they would then sell as part of the grant. So we tried not to just give away the money, in order to track where it went.

**Montgomery:** When you said community stabilization, what do you mean by that?

**Wilson:** The Community Stabilization Program was a civilian effort to come right along with the military [after violence or combat], often in collaboration with the civil affairs program. And oftentimes they would work together and divide up different areas, based on expertise, to work with that community to get it back on its feet again. So they were here in Ramadi working. They started here in I think it was early-to-mid-2007, and at first, the implementing, we had American staff that lived here on the base, and then as soon as it got secure enough, then they moved outside. I think they've said they've been out there a little over a year now, so that would have been actually probably late 2007 when they moved off the base and into town, into one of the villas. And then they established their office. I think they said it was 150 employees—Iraqi staff—they had working directly for them managing these different types of infrastructure and training programs. Overall, that program has been fairly large throughout the whole country. I think it's like \$850 million. So I'm not talking about a small project when they're doing these sort of things.

They're reaching out to a lot of people. So, for example, one of the buildings we're doing here in Ramadi right now is the library, and that's a \$2 million project.

To give you an idea of the scale of it, when I look at our IRD staff, I think they're very brave, because these were Americans that were working here, following directly after a military action, working with the communities, trying to get them back on their feet. And we're working, and they have their bodyguards and stuff, but they're unarmed. They're civilians. And to me, that's part of the success story. Right now, they're living in Ramadi, and they're moving around in armored vehicles, and they're guarded, but they're still moving around . . . they're living in the city. We have five cities here in Anbar, so they were in Ramadi, Haditha, Habbaniyah, and al-Qaim. So we've had Americans living in these cities probably the same amount of time as here in Ramadi. We have American staff out there. In some cases, I think like in Habbaniyah, though, they did live with the Marines on their base there, FOB [forward operating base].

**Montgomery:** I think the very fact that they're out in town now says a whole lot.

**Wilson:** I think so. . . . And they move around pretty freely. They're not wearing their vest and helmets [inaudible], and they're moving around, not having any problems. Their biggest concern is if the IP [Iraqi police] are just shooting off in the air, shooting their weapons around. So to me, that's where I look at it, as it definitely seems to me the time for the regular USAID-type of programs to begin. You agree with our decision makers that the stabilization program needs to come to an end. It's now time for the next generation of programs, because our folks are definitely out there moving around.

**McWilliams:** So it's a building-block approach?

**Wilson:** Exactly, and that's where we have other partners that have been nervous about coming up here, but I keep pointing to our IRD staffs and [say] look, they're here, living here, no problems.

**Montgomery:** Are you getting many NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] coming into the country?

**Wilson:** Well, IRD is an NGO. They're an international NGO. We have different types of whether they're for profit or not for profit. IRD is a not-for-profit institution. They're a large NGO that does a lot of implementation of USAID-funded programs. They're here. CHF [Cooperative Housing Foundation] is another one that's an NGO, a large international NGO, but they're here, and they've been working in Anbar for quite some time. Their approach has been more under the radar screen, so while IRD was working very closely with the civil affairs units, CAP, Community Action Program, which has been implemented by CHF, was trying to work under the radar. So they would work with political staff, working with the communities, have no connection to American staff at all on the military. So they didn't meet with USAID people. They didn't meet with our military colleagues. They just definitely kept separate. And that's changing, too. That was another argument that we made, that's like Anbar is now secure enough, people are not under threat. They come out openly to meet with us, so there is no need for the CAP program to remain secret. We need to now know more about what's going on. They need to coordinate with us in advance, collaborate with us.

**Montgomery:** Oh, I see, it's a matter of how you calculate the allocation of funds and what you would expect from it.

**Wilson:** Yeah. And for a for-profit contractor, usually the way we would work with them is at the direction of the government. It's in the government's interest, so if we're doing a project with them, we have more control over that. If we're working with a not-for-profit institution, we do what we would call a cooperative agreement, so that we have less oversight. It's more their program. It's more their implementation, more their decisions. We still have input into their work plan. They still have to meet government regulations and requirements, but we put more of the burden on the implementer to make some of those day-to-day decisions. Some people would say that there's more buy in that way, that since it's more their program, it's more in their interests to make sure that there's good results. But I've found that it also depends on the people. We have contractors that are working for us that care just as much about the results as a not-for-profit, so it just depends on the way we manage it, I guess.

**Montgomery:** Since they have less self-interest in it, then would you say they're given more latitude?

**Wilson:** Yeah, I think that's pretty fair. A contractor would tend to go into a risky situation because they would take the risk because they want to make the profit. . . . We have Al-Taqaddum, it's been three branches—there's one in Fallujah, one in Ramadi, and one in al-Qaim. And they provide small loans to people, say between \$3,000 and \$4,000 is the average size of the loan. And then people repay that, and they pay a small fee. They try to avoid the interest rates here to try to make them more fitting in with the Islamic banking type of practices, but they'll charge a fee, and it's a sliding fee. So in some ways, it's almost similar to interest. You just pay it up front.

**McWilliams:** So that's available for anybody who needs to grow a business or start a business?

**Wilson:** Right. And then some of the issues are what types of collateral do people have? Do they always have access to collateral? What do they provide? And especially if it's a small business, then there are ways if they do have a legitimate business, and it makes it a lot easier to make the loan. They've given several loans for cars because people want to start driving taxis, so they turn that into a business. And that's if they have a good-looking business plan, then a lot of times they'll take the risk. We have a really good repayment rate here. I think it's really high; it's like 90 percent for repayment. Some could argue in that case that they're not taking enough risks, they need to branch out and support more small businesses.

**McWilliams:** What other types of businesses are there?

**Wilson:** They've got taxis. I guess there have been a few women that have taken loans out for hairstyling, hairdressing types of businesses. Sewing seems to be popular. I'm not sure how many sewing centers there are that are profitable, but it sure seems to be popular. People talk about it a lot and want to set up sewing shops. I know of a couple of women that are running some larger ones, and they sew curtains for the hospitals and stuff like that, but they've gotten some loans from us, loans and grants actually, in a couple of cases. We've

supported some agricultural type of loans, helping people buy equipment. We keep experimenting with seeds and fertilizer. That one's typically much more risky and harder to do. Even in the U.S., it's harder to do, but we're encouraging [that]. . . .

We've been trying to get the agriculture program, Inma, working more in Anbar. We've had a slow start in getting that program up and going and really reaching out into the provinces. They came out last year and reestablished a mushroom factory. [Mantha Kirbit had] a functioning mushroom factory before the war, and there's supposedly a good market for mushrooms, [but] part of the problem is transportation. Because of the heat and everything, they have to sell them daily. So he's working on cold storage facilities and trying to improve, get some cold storage trucks. . . . Once they get that, then they can actually reach the Baghdad market. . . . So it was helping him rehabilitate his facilities. They're pretty much just old and beat up. I don't think anything was really bombed out, but it was just pretty much neglected. And part of it was he wanted to get a larger-sized business up and going because, again, it's employment generation that we're looking at. In addition, it just helps with the local market as well, which is very important.

**McWilliams:** And then your fourth program was the IRAP?

**Wilson:** Yeah. The IRAP program is a small grants program pretty much designed to assist the PRT technical officers in getting access to funding. I think the maximum was \$200,000. They're going out with their civil affairs counterparts, and they see something that needs to be done. They didn't have access to the CERP funds so they could make a more immediate response. So it was a way for USAID [and the] State Department to be able to have access to that funding and be able to make a quick response.

We've used that to work along with the civil affairs units in some cases. If they're rehabilitating a school, maybe we'll buy furniture and books and outfit the school. In rehabilitating the library, we're also purchasing some furniture and some books for the library. In order to support the elections, we funded three NGOs that were then trained. They received all the training and got the certification, the cards and everything, and then they became trainers who went

out and reached out to other NGOs, who then went and started letting people know this is—once we got the official ballots—here’s the ballots, here’s how to understand them, here’s how you would go and vote. Not crossing the line, of course, and telling them who to vote for, but following the procedures. I think they said it was 30,000 people that were able to go and conduct their training or do the outreach programs. . . . So that was pretty successful.

**McWilliams:** What are some of the cultural challenges that you face here that you might not experience somewhere else? Are there unique challenges here?

**Wilson:** Yes. I think the biggest one, and frustration that we have, is being so disconnected from the community. Most places where we would work, and where we would have [US]AID programs, it’s not as dangerous, usually. We’re working in—crime notwithstanding; we do work in places like South Africa that have pretty high crime rates—but Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, any of our Eastern European countries, we would be living, our officers would be living in the community in town. You’d get to know the neighbors. You’re going to the restaurants. You essentially become a part of the community, so you’re interacting with them, and you have a much closer understanding for the culture, for the language, because you’d be out there living and working in that, and you would have I guess an easier time of learning a language. Then also, [you are] just much closer to the project implementation as well because then you can see it first hand.

Here there’s all kinds of rumors that go around, and I’ll hear a variety of stories about whether people really think IRD was helpful or not. And some of that comes from the community that didn’t get a project, so then they dislike IRD because they didn’t get any—the contractor who didn’t get the contract, so that he’s going to complain about the work. Or they supported what they call the illegal councils, the councils that stayed versus the people that were part of the provincial council that left, or the city councils that left, and then they came back. So then you’ve got those divides in the political parties and so, “Oh, you’re supporting that party, or that party.” So if we were out there [as] a part of the community, then

we would be interacting and seeing first hand, and we could talk about it, and we could talk to people.

Here, we're just so disconnected that we just hear the stories on occasion, and we don't really know where they're coming from. You kind of guess, but you don't really know. And then from a USAID perspective, we're really reliant on our implementing partner—for example, IRD—because they're out there. They're living out there. So I'm really reliant on getting information from them. Usually, it's part of my job to provide some oversight, monitoring of their work. Here I can do a little bit of it, but I can't do it the way we would normally do it.

**McWilliams:** Iraq was once referred to as a grain belt of the Middle East. Is there a possibility of returning to that?

**Wilson:** I think maybe in some very specific ways. I think it could be. I think they need to look harder at their irrigation systems and what they want to do, and sustainability of those irrigation systems. But putting up higher-value crops, similar to in California, the high value—the broccoli, the tomatoes, cabbage, that sort of thing—versus wheat. If you look at it from that perspective, [wheat is] not economically supportable, in my opinion, for production here. So at the higher value, I think they could do better.

**Montgomery:** What's the shortcoming in irrigation systems?

**Wilson:** Some of that is looking at the recharge rates. In the U.S., with the [overall lock], for instance, we're depleting it. I don't know what the recharge rate is and whatnot, but the scientists will look at that. They would evaluate that. When I was in Afghanistan, that was definitely an issue, and what the geologists would tell me is it depends on if you're pulling out what they call "old water," or "ancient water," then you know it doesn't recharge quickly, and so you probably shouldn't be using that to irrigate. You have to be careful.

**Montgomery:** I thought it all just came right out of the river.

**Wilson:** Some of it. I think they are using probably some to irrigate, but usually they use a deep-water well, and so then you're tapping down into those aquifers, the underground rivers. And that's where

I think they do need to take a look at that. USAID has been asked to rehabilitate some of the irrigation systems. So it was one of our requirements to do an environmental impact assessment. That's one of the things you check.

Because of the Oil for Food Program, it's been a long time since anybody's really undertaken real scientific studies here. That was one of the reasons for the significant decrease in agricultural production here was during the Oil for Food Program times, then they didn't get the inputs that they were used to getting as part of what Saddam [Hussein] used to give out, [which] was free seeds, and fertilizer, and tractors. It just got neglected, and during that time period, my understanding was that they lost some of their markets, and so it's just over a 10-year period of time, it's really hard to get that back.

**McWilliams:** Right. Now, are you talking al-Anbar, or Iraq-wide?

**Wilson:** I believe that's Iraqi-wide. I know definitely it's had a significant impact here in Anbar, especially if you look at the markets. The farmers have lost those markets to other traders, and then once they get those traders that are used to working with them, and they know them, it's really hard to break back in. But I know it did impact all of Iraq.

**Montgomery:** What do you deal with in governance?

**Wilson:** In governance, we have a lot of different areas we're working on. Specifically, we're going to be working on training programs for the new provincial council and the new governor, and we will tailor-make those programs to whatever the needs of the council members or the governor are, depending on who it is. If it's somebody who has no experience, we'll be able to give them the type of programs they need to get them up to speed. If it's somebody who we've been working with, and he's pretty well educated and understands it, then we can tailor-make some programs if they have specific questions on some of the finer points.

The provincial powers law is pretty broad, and we definitely don't want to interpret it for anybody, but if somebody had questions on types of interpretation, then we could guide them to ways maybe in their own

government where they could seek those types of clarifications, or give them examples of how we've tried to clarify them in the U.S. or even in another country, so that sort of thing. We're doing some work with civil society, trying to work with community groups since they're not used to working with their government and getting their needs supported, working with the community groups on how to advocate for changes in their community to the local government, to the municipal-level government.

And then [we are] trying to train the municipal-level government and the provincial government on how to listen to the constituents. What does that mean? Because working in a top-down environment, they're just simply not used to taking that into account. Why ask? So we have to educate them [that] this is the way people will ask for things, and these are the appropriate ways that you can respond. . . . So somebody's just coming to—for example—coming to complain that the schools are dirty. Yes, you'll hire a cleaner, but then how do you impact the overall problem? Do you give more budget to the individual school? Are they going to be more top-down? Are they going to just hire the cleaners and then go out and say, "Okay, you're going to clean the whole school." [We're] just giving them the type of options of the way they can respond.

**Montgomery:** Are they generally receptive to this, or do you have to overcome a sense of they've already got an idea of how things are going to work, in a way? Or "I'll go to the sheikh," that sort of thing?

**Wilson:** We hear a variety of things. I think that mostly what we're hearing is that the people want to be able to come to the government and have a representative government, rather than just relying on the sheikh, that they would like to have that. What's interesting is that we've been working with the ePRT [embedded provincial reconstruction team], working with the municipal government here. Mayor Latif [Obaid Ayada of Ramadi] and some of his advisers, especially at first, his adviser would come and say, "I've been to the schools. The schools are dirty. Coalition forces hired widows to clean the schools. We want you to hire more widows." Well, that's a good example of something that you need to start pushing the mayor and the DGs [director generals] of

education on how to respond, rather than just asking us for the funding to do that. “That’s something you need to do. That’s how it works in America. Well, you’ve got to try it here, too.” And so then, actually, they go off, and they’ll make a report, and they’ll come back and say, “Well, we were able to do this. We were able to get this fixed, we were able to do it.”

So I think it’s one of those things that I think they have it in their mind, “It can’t be done,” then they’ll go do it, and it’ll work. But then you have to keep reminding them, “Yes, it can be done,” because then they’ll come back to you again and say, “No, no, no, you can’t do it.” “Yeah, you can.” So I think that is a bright spot. I think it is working by and large, but you’ve got to keep reminding them.

I’ve heard that story even on the larger scale with one of our budget guys who said that when they did go to Baghdad, when they did get the governor to go to Baghdad to fix a particular problem, it got fixed. But then if you’re talking to the governor, he said, “Well, they don’t listen to me. They won’t do it.” Well, that’s where you pick your battles and you go push it. “Look, you had success before.” Confidence-building, I guess, hand-holding [is what we’re doing]. Some people would say maybe that’s an example of it’s time for us to back away—don’t do it.

Everything I’ve heard from my USAID supervisors, I think they would agree with General [John F.] Kelly that it’s been a very good and positive working relationship. I know that USAID has very much enjoyed also working with the Marines, and I guess feeling, I think in some ways it’s sort of a [compatible] relationship. I know that the Marines are very action-oriented and practical. USAID tends to try to be that way. We have our bureaucracy, but we’re also project implementers. We go out, and we run programs. We may do it a little differently, but we’re still program-oriented.



# Appendix

## Acronyms & Abbreviations



## **Appendix**

### *Acronyms and Abbreviations*

I MEF	I Marine Expeditionary Force
II MEF	II Marine Expeditionary Force
ACE	Air Combat Element
ANGLICO	Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company
AO	Area of Operation
AOR	Area of Responsibility
APC	Anbar People's Committee
AQI/AQIZ	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
Arty LnO	Artillery Liaison Officer
ASR	Alternative Supply Route
BAT	Biometric Assessment Tool
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BIAP	Baghdad International Airport
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
BTT	Border Transition Team
CA	Civil Affairs
CAG	Civil Affairs Group
CAP	Combined Action Platoon
Casevac	Casualty Evacuation
CBN	Chemical, Biological, and Nuclear Weapons
CentCom	U.S. Central Command, Tampa, FL
CERP	Commander's Emergency Relief Program
CFLCC	Coalition Forces Land Component Command
CG	Commanding General

CHF	Cooperative Housing Foundation
CJTF-7	Combined Joint Task Force 7
CLC	Concerned Local Citizens
CMO	Civil-Military Operations
CMOC	Civil-Military Operations Center
CNN	Cable News Network
CO	Commanding Officer
COA	Course of Action
COC	Combat Operations Center
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COP	Combat Outpost
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CSP	Community Stabilization Program
CSS	Combat Service Support
DCG	Deputy Commanding General
Det	Detachment
DG	Director General
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DoS	U.S. Department of State
ECP	Entry Control Points
ECRA	Emergency Council for the Rescue of al-Anbar
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
ePRT	Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team
ERU	Emergency Response Unit
EWS	Expeditionary Warfare School, Quantico, VA
FAO	Foreign Area Officer
FLOT	Forward Line of Troops

FLT	Fallujah Liason Team
FOB	Forward Operating Base
FSSG	Force Service Support Group
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCE	Ground Combat Element
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOI	Government of Iraq
H&S	Headquarters & Support
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
HVI	High Value Individual
IA	Iraqi Army
IC	Intelligence Community
ICDC	Iraqi Civil Defense Corps
ID	Identification
IECI	Independent Election Committee of Iraq
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IIP	Islamic Iraqi Party
IO	Information Operations
IP	Iraqi Police
IRAP	Iraq Rapid Assistance Program
IRD	International Relief and Development
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance
ITAO	Iraq Transition Assistance Office
IZ	International Zone, Baghdad ["Green Zone"]
JCC	Joint Coordination Center
JMD	Joint Manning Document
JSS	Joint Security Stations
JTAC	Joint Tactical Air Controller

KIA	Killed in Action
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
LD	Line of Departure
LNO	Liaison Officer
LOC	Line of Communication
LOO	Line of Operation
LRAD	Long Range Acoustic Device
MAGTF	Marine Air-Ground Task Force
MARCENT	Marine Corps Central Command, Tampa, FL
MARDIV	Marine Division
MarForPac	Marine Forces Pacific
MCIA	Marine Corps Intelligence Activity
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit
MLG	Marine Logistics Unit
MML	Mohammed Mahmoud Latif
MNC-I	Multi National Corps-Iraq
MND	Multinational Division
MNF	Multinational Force
MNF-I	Multi National Force-Iraq
MNF-W	Multi National Force-West
MNF-West	Multi National Force-West
MOD	Minister of Defense
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
MP	Military Police
MSR	Main Supply Route
MSI	Mutamar Sahwa al-Iraq
MTT	Military Transition Team
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization

NPR	National Public Radio
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
OGA	Other Government Agency
OIF I	Operation Iraqi Freedom I
OIF II	Operation Iraqi Freedom II
OODA	Observe, Orient, Decide, Act
OPA	Office of Provincial Authority
OP	Observation Posts
OpsO	Operations Officer
OVR	Operation Vigilant Resolve
P&R	Programs and Resources
PA	Public Address
PAO	Public Affairs Officer
PDOP	Provincial Director of Police
PFT	Physical Fitness Test
PIC	Provincial Iraqi Control
PGM	Precision Guided Missile
PJCC	Provisional Joint Coordination Center
PM	Prime Minister
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSD	Personal Security Detail
PsyOps	Psychological Operations
PTT	Police Transition Team
QRF	Quick Reaction Force or Quick Reaction Funds
R&S	Reconnaissance and Surveillance
RCT	Regimental Combat Team
RFF	Request for Forces
RIP	Relief in Place

RIPTOA	Relief in Place/Transfer of Authority
ROC	Required Operation Capacity
ROE	Rules of Engagement
RPG	Rocket-Propelled Grenade
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
SAA	Sahwa al-Anbar
SAI	Sahwa al-Iraq
SASO	Stability and Support Operations
SeaBees	Construction Battalions (CBs)
SIGINT	Signals Intelligence
SecDef	Secretary of Defense
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SOI	Sons of Iraq
SPTT	Special Police Transition Team
SVBIED	Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device
TACON	Tactical Control
TECOM	Training and Education Command
TO	Table of Organization or Task Organization
TOA	Transfer of Authority
TPT	Tactical PsyOps [Psychological Operations] Team
TTP	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VBIED	Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
XO	Executive Officer



## About the Editors

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