



# INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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Interviewee: Matthew Sherman

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SCHER: My name is Daniel Scher, I am the Associate Director of the Institutions for Fragile States project, and I'm here in Washington, DC with Matt Sherman. Matt, before we begin, I'd just like to make sure that we've spoken through the informed consent and if you had any questions about that I've answered them.

SHERMAN: Yes, you've covered all of the materials thoroughly.

SCHER: Before we begin talking about actual policing, we like to start the conversation just by getting to know a little bit more about you and your personal background. Would you mind talking about the position you hold now and how you ended up working in Iraq and the career trajectory that took you there?

SHERMAN: *Sure. Right now I do a number— I am primarily a consultant right now, doing my own private consulting, being an adviser with the Scowcroft group, being an adjunct here at RAND, and have, since my time working at the Ministry of Interior, I have gone back to Iraq a few times to work on political military issues. But before I went to Iraq I had been trained as a lawyer, had spent some of my time in Eastern Europe working as a monitor for various elections that were going on in Bosnia and Kosovo and things of that such. I had focused a lot of my time, earlier career, on international relations, international politics, getting a Master's in International Relations, and working with people that have based their careers in that field.*

*I had worked briefly on the 2000 (George W.) Bush campaign and got to know Dr. Condoleezza Rice during that time. While I was at law school, during that, I then went off and practiced law up in New Jersey. But then with the Iraq war coming about I had offered to go out there and assist, which then eventually led to a position at the Ministry of Interior as an adviser. I initially had thought that I was going over to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work on more diplomatic type of issues, but the powers that be thought that I would go to Interior because that was where there was a need for additional people.*

*I left my position in a law firm in December of 2003. I went to the Pentagon to begin to immerse myself in some of the issues for a few weeks in December of '03 and then landed in Iraq in the beginning of January '04 and was there for two years.*

*Since then I came back, worked as a consultant and then returned back to Iraq as a political adviser for the U.S. military in Baghdad, and the military division that was in charge of operations throughout the city. And that was from November '06 until December '07. Since then I have been back here in DC.*

SCHER: Before we get into the functional areas that we spoke of earlier, there's a question I'd like to ask. When you went to the Ministry of the Interior, when you first arrived there, what was the situation? What was it like? Because one of the comments you made in another interview was that, as opposed to the Ministry of Defense where you were rebuilding from the ground up, the Ministry of Interior already had structures in place, personnel and staff.

SHERMAN: *Right, it was the remaining security force in Iraq. During the regime there were many different security forces, apparatus, intelligence services and things of that such. All of them had either just disappeared or were dismantled, such as the Ministry of Defense. The remaining one was the Ministry of Interior which was in charge of policing, for the most part, a force of about, we estimate I think, 60,000 people. A force that was very centrally controlled in Baghdad and not necessarily a police force that we would regard as engaged in community-based policing.*

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*Personally, when I went there, you really kind of just took it all in. I worked on security issues before but not policing issues, and so I really kind of took those initial few months, three or four months, and literally just kept my mouth shut and just listened to what people had to say, hear what the arguments that were being made, got to know some of the people that were involved in the process and really just try to learn. I initially thought that I was only going to be there for six months so I thought it would be good to at least use half my time learning, half my time actually doing something substantive as opposed to just diving right in and causing more problems from the beginning. But the position, as I mentioned before, ended up lasting for two years.*

*It was a job where you loved it and hated it every day but I learned something, many things, new every day and it was an experience like none other.*

SCHER: I can only imagine.

SHERMAN: Yes.

SCHER: So, when you say you're sitting back, you're listening to people, you're trying to get a sense of the situation, who are the types of people that you're seeking out, and the types of people that you're speaking to?

SHERMAN: *Initially there was so much. We were initially based in what was called the Republican Palace, the CPA (Coalition Provisional Authority) building which was right in the—everybody knows, it is where the current embassy is. It is where all of the CPA personnel were based. And as a result I of course listened to my colleagues who were around me. When we got in there were, I want to say between 15 and 20. The number eventually grew to 50 and then dropped down to 8 and there was a whole wild ride of how many people came and went for a host of reasons. So it was really listening to a senior adviser who was there who had an extensive 30-plus-year DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) history. It was listening to some of the senior police advisers, primarily British, that had been brought in to provide advising— not only from Britain but also from Canada, from Australia. There were some folks from Spain that were brought in to try to develop a forensics program.*

*And in addition to then other people and other offices, in the political office, in the office of National Security Affairs that we were working with on security issues. With Ambassador (L. Paul) Bremer, (III) in the front office, and trying to some degree to link into the military. This was one of the real difficulties we had in the early months, in the first few months that I was there, of linking into what was then known as CJTF 7 (Combined Joint Task Force 7) which was the military command. They were based primarily over at Camp Victory which is between 5 and 10 miles away from the Republican Palace. To make sure that we were on, not even a similar page but working from the same book type of thing, because they were doing their own thing and they had their own operations. We also needed their assistance though because of logistical reasons and a whole host of other things. Linking in with them was difficult in those early days.*

*So we were primarily—in many ways we were in a bubble in the Republican Palace. We also made a conscious effort to say, listen, where are the Iraqis? You know, these are the folks that we're working with, that we're supposed to be working to help. Early on then I started joining the senior adviser, Steve Castile, in going and meeting with the Minister and Deputy Ministers, very early on, and eventually that became how I spent the vast majority of my time, just working*

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*with them and gaining their insights on stuff and being able to understand more about what the Iraqi perspective was which could then marry up with what the CPA was doing or later the embassy or military and things of that such.*

SCHER: So, just to pull back a little bit, you're speaking to people, you're trying to get a sense of the situation, what do you see as the critical problems in the Ministry of Interior at the time, or the critical issues that you felt needed to be worked on?

SHERMAN: *I think a lot of it was initially in the sense of just connectivity. That's not only just with us, but I think that also rested with the Iraqis quite a bit. I know it was a concern that the then, again we're talking early 2004, the then Minister of Interior, Nuri Badran felt. Now, having said that, just as a point of reference, I went through four ministers through the two years that I worked there. And so Nuri was the first of four, who was there for, I want to say until April or May, [Nuri Badran was Minister of Interior from September 2003 until April 2004] and then he left. But back to my initial point about connectivity.*

*We had again, we saw that so much of our time was being gobbled up by just writing memos and spinning our wheels and doing kind of bureaucratic CPA things that we were having difficulty developing policies that would then actually be implemented on the ground. The military was busy doing their thing, trying to establish contacts with police forces that were in many ways on their own throughout the country, perhaps engaging in some training, perhaps providing some forms of equipment or ammunition. And the Ministry itself was trying to do the same thing by trying to reconnect about who was actually out there and who wasn't.*

*So you had this giant disjointed effort that was going on, where you had policies that were endorsed by the CPA and I think also by the military earlier on in 2003, of 30,000 in 30 days, meaning recruit 30,000 policemen in 30 days, in order to stand up the security forces and things of that such. The U.S. military, the coalition military would then go out and find people and sign them up and all this other stuff. And it was not the effective way of building a police force, to say the least, but this was the approach that was being taken, again in late 2003. And these were the sort of things that greatly frustrated many of the Iraqis, and the Minister particularly. They had no clue who these people were, what was going on, where they were being assigned and things of that such. Let alone, then, the difficulties that we had with us trying to stand up or come up with some uniform type of training program facility and then perhaps getting some equipment and being able to try to push that equipment out then throughout the country and having kind of an ad hoc type of relationship with various military contacts that we had to then get that equipment out there. So that was the general type of frustration we were having, compounded then with our own staffing frustrations of being severely understaffed.*

*Again, when I got there I think there were about twelve people to deal with the whole kit and caboodle. Eventually the number went up to, I want to say about fifty, but then it dropped back significantly down because of human-resources and political issues. And it was difficult to gain any momentum, because you had people that were there for a short period of time, they came over for three months or five months and then left. You really don't get an understanding, not even an understanding, a semblance of how to get things done the first few months you're there, let alone being able to begin to piece together some of the nuance that is necessary. And so really, particularly in those early days, when people started piecing just one or two pieces of the puzzle together then it was time for them to go, and that made things very challenging.*

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SCHER: I'd like to actually just move into talking about recruitment because you raised this issue of recruiting 30,000 people in 30 days. So— I'm interested in what were the types of actual recruitment programs that were in place. You said the military was going out and finding people, but how were they finding people, and how were these people assessed—?

SHERMAN: *I don't know. This was again before I arrived there. This was during, I want to say this was September, October. I don't know if you've talked with (Bernard) "Bernie" Kerik yet, but I know he was the Senior Adviser at the time when this was happening. And I think it was a lot of the MSCs (Multi Subordinate Commands) going out to certain neighborhoods and setting up certain types of 'recruitment stations' of sorts. I don't have the details on it. It would be fascinating to know how many of those folks are still on the police rolls or actually still are serving, in what capacity. I don't think there's a way of finding that out but I'd be amused to see what the actual numbers are on that.*

*Now I think recruitment has been a constant challenge. My answer to this is going to transcend a number of years, so not just the earlier things. I think there has been such an intense focus, more so of course in the earlier days but also still now, of being able to stand up certain forces. I mean, it goes to the heart of one of the policies that the President (George W. Bush) laid out. I think he said it June 28, 2005. You know, as the Iraqis stand up we will stand down. As the Iraqi security forces stand up, we will stand down [President George W. Bush made a live televised address from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, on June 28, 2005. Quote, "Our strategy can be summed up this way: As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down."] And this is a mantra that is still more or less followed today. And being able to stand up numbers and stand them up and stand them up. And you're being able to put through thousands of individuals per week at the various training academies throughout Iraq and at the time in Jordan.*

*But what has always kind of— initially, you know, why are we having so much difficulty? We are producing all these people, but, we are not able to stand down. It just wasn't equating. And people then started talking about the quantity over the quality, and it is definitely part of a quality problem. And there have been measures to take to correct that and being able to have longer-term programs for training and things of that such. But, you know, the earlier days focused on being able to crank out rank and file as opposed to leaders. That was something that we fought against vehemently.*

*But it also, I think, goes to the way and how the political system has, or was designed, and its effect on the development of the security forces. Because what you have in Iraq right now is a system where there is little trust. And each time there is a new government that comes into power, in many ways it is a purging of the old and building of the new. And many times that is done by force. So in those early days when you had a governing council, the transitional government, the interim government, the permanent government, you had, really, purgings that went on of rank and file, of leaders, of direction, of certain focus. And so you were producing all these people but really it wasn't understood where they then went or what happened to them. That caused, I think, a lot of the problems that we have, and I don't know if it was fully considered when the governance plan was being considered. I think it is something to be really thought through much more carefully in the future.*

*Not to say that democracy is bad, not to say that elections are bad, but to say that there are very significant consequences that come with them, particularly in*

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*environments that are establishing themselves where there is little trust, where there are generations of abuse, where they only really trust their own. And there are, and this is in many ways, a concern that I have in Iraq with the upcoming provincial and national elections that will happen. You're going to have a further decentralization of power to the provinces which could be good or could be bad, but it will change the make up of the local security forces. The provinces will gain more power from the central government and that will re-jigger the power matrix. For better or for worse, there is going to be a change of some sort. You're going to have national elections which are going to change the make up of many of the leadership, maybe better maybe worse, but there's going to be a change of sorts.*

*What I really think what is necessary in a lot of these early states is some form of continuity. You want to be able to make sure you're working with a representative government. You want to, of course, hope that you're working with individuals that respect the rule of law, and have the best intent of the nation as a whole but that certainly isn't always the case. And while a lot of people think, 'well, if we have new elections then this will bring in different people' and sometimes it does and many times it doesn't. But based upon, kind of, what I saw during this experience and the constant turnover, some semblance, some stability, may weigh as being more important. Dance with the devil you know than the devil you don't, in some ways. I say that kind of tongue in cheek but part of me means that.*

*Because what happens then is you have people that come in and people that go out. You also by having short abbreviated political timelines it also alters the decision making that a lot of these leaders have. By saying, you know— some of these governments were only in power nine months and they know that they're only going to be in power for a short period of time. That could breed corruption. That definitely— in an environment that is based on helping your own, you're just going to try to get as much to your particular people in a short time frame because you know you're not going to be in government later on. And this was a problem that we had with some of the militias early on, when the problem was really starting to bubble up in 2004, and when (Ayad) Allawi was the prime minister. The amount of political capital that would have been necessary to deal with that didn't make sense to him. It wasn't something that could be addressed in a short period of time, it wasn't something that was going to be politically advantageous to him or his party, and it was something that would take many years to adequately and thoroughly address. And as a result it was ignored in many ways. And these are the sort of problems you have.*

*So recruitment and dealing with these other types of issues which then greatly affect the development of a police force or the infiltration of certain rogue elements into domestic security forces. And I really, really— this is something I've been thinking a lot about, really believe has been one of the great, most significant reasons why we've had so much difficulty in being able to stand up a reliable security force.*

SCHER: Can I ask maybe if you could talk specifically about what this purging and this changeover in personnel meant for you. What were the specific problems that you encountered or specific incidents, some actual examples of the types of problems that occurred? And then the second part to that question is, once you've been there for a little bit of time and you have the sense that there is this constant turnover, were there things that you were doing to try and institutionalize your efforts or try and make them, I guess, less dependent on the types of people that were around you? So two questions.

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*SHERMAN: The most frequently, the most widely known area where this caused problems with the turnover of things was with the commandos, the special police commandos, now known as the National Police, and how they were virtually transformed. The commandos were, again, an Iraqi creation, something that was started during the very early days of the Allawi government in mid 2004 by a Minister by the name of Falah al-Naqib, he was the third Minister that I worked with. He is a Sunni but more of a nationalist than anything else. Someone whose father was very prominent in the Iraqi army prior to Saddam (Hussein) coming to power. He had a rich history in areas of Samarra which are in north central Iraq. He kind of always lived in his father's shadow with wanting to, being a military man, but he never took part in the military.*

*So his, one of his, I think his primary focus was setting up these commandos during the early days of—in Baghdad I remember being in the Jadiriya bunker with him during really his first week in power saying, "I'm going to stand up the security force that will save Iraq." Because what we saw at that time was that the police, standard police, regular police, were not up to the fight that was breaking out in such areas as Najaf, parts of Baghdad, up north in Tikrit and things of that such, where they were being outgunned, they were retreating. But having said that, most police forces wouldn't have been able to withstand this type of—this was a military battle that was being waged. In his mind what you needed were military men to fight it, and you did not have adequate forces within the Ministry of Defense at that time either. So he felt it his responsibility to fill that gap and so created the commandos.*

*And these were mainly Republican Guard, special Republican Guard and other types of folks that had prior experience primarily within military operations. And they proved to be the most tactically effective force we had—lots of problems with them, though, with trying to deal with human-rights abuses and heavy-handed tactics which were addressed. But in an environment where there were few Iraqis that were willing to fight, these guys were willing to step up. They were not under the operational control of MNFI (Multi-National Force—Iraq) which is the leading, the U.S., the coalition military throughout the country. They were independent, but they worked hand-in-glove with U.S. and they were also being provided arms and some mentoring, assisting, by the coalition. But they only lasted for, at least the leadership only lasted there for a little while because eventually the Allawi government was then replaced by the (Ibrahim al-)Jaafari government. And of course then a new set of leaders, ministers and things like that came along with it.*

*And I think—and with the Jaafari government, the most dominant political party, the political parties that won were the Shia block because many of the Sunnis chose to stand, to not take part in the elections. So the Shia block really swept the slate. The most dominant of those parties was a party name of SCIRI (Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq), now goes by ISCI (Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq), which really had its pick of whatever ministry it wanted and the only one that it sought was the Ministry of Interior. And I'm of the opinion that they wanted it in order to gain control of the commandos. Because they were a force that could travel around the country, that were independent in many ways.*

*But I also think that they saw, that SCIRI saw them as a potential threat, being perhaps made up of individuals that had been involved in the former regime that put down some of the Shia uprisings and other people down south after the first Gulf War or other types of involvements they had. So they saw them I think as a potential threat and also as a potential vehicle. They were transformed, subtly at*

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*first but something that became more evident and very clear when coalition went into that same bunker where they were initially created and found individuals being detained and abused, about 180 or so, I could be off on the number, that were primarily Sunni, but also Shia, and that were more or less going about and targeting individuals that were either a prior threat or a potential threat to them in the future, primarily politically but also militarily.*

*And that was where the efforts to try and train and equip a security force was then being used against some of the principles, many, all the principles that we were trying to establish. The coalition wasn't involved in the operations that the commandos were doing to round up these people. But it was something that their makeup and their intent and their change and their purpose completely changed. And those are the types of things that happen, many times because—there still is so much that remains undefined, up for grabs I guess you could say, and the country is still being defined, that people then use violence to gain those spoils or to gain political power or influence. And that is kind of what we saw in that specific instance.*

*What you also saw was political hardball being played with regard to who was taking part in police training. This is something I pieced together afterwards but didn't surprise me, was that, what you saw at one point was this team, this group of people that were supposed to go through police training and the minister at the time refused to put them through. What happened, after he kind of said "they're not going to be taking part in police training" was that his brother was then kidnapped. And a few days transpired, and he let that group through. And what happened then was that then some of Muqtada Sadr's people miraculously found the brother and wanted to make sure he was safe and available. That just kind of shows the type of political dynamics that you're working with in this process and why you have to be so—be much more informed about who you're providing this training and equipping to, it's not numbers. It is partially quality, but it is more important who these people are, where they come from, where they're going to be stationed, how they'll be used. Because, again, while our intent might be just and well thought out, the system can get manipulated and used for other ways that we don't necessarily intend.*

SCHER: Were you involved in any efforts to try and—clarify that a bit more, like who was being trained, where they were going to go—?

SHERMAN: *There were attempts to try to clarify it early on, but those who had already been brought in—there was a thing called the qualifying committee which was meant to review those who had either been stood up during the 30,000 in 30 days initiative or other types of things, but, it never got off the ground. It was something that wasn't sustained because you just had lots of turnover within the ministry and also just because of the political nature of it all. Being able though to gain a greater understanding about who was being recruited was something that came on later, of being able to give retinal scans and being able to try to run individuals' backgrounds through some sorts of databases and things of that such.*

*But having said that, I think that's all well and good, but only to a degree, in the sense of, you know really, lots of these folks are not going to come up on any terrorist list. On occasion I guess you might strike one. You then might be able then to tag a few to some future instances. But it was very difficult to hold anybody accountable for who was recruited. Many times we didn't know and many times then the people that dealt with recruiting had left, and if there is to be any, again, if there is to be any greater emphasis on who takes part, I think there*

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*really needs to be, more than a sponsor, but someone you can hold accountable for this group of individuals. And being able to understand where they are.*

*An example of this, I found a statistic out after my time at MOL (Ministry of Interior), when I went back to be the political adviser for First Cavalry Division – the military division that was in charge of Baghdad from November 2006 to December 2008. Is that, you know, Sadr City [‘Sadr City’ is a suburb district, one of nine administrative districts of Baghdad], a city of 2-plus million folks, I want to say only has a police force of under 2,000 people or something like that. But they provide the vast majority of police—the vast majority of police that are in Baghdad come from Sadr City. So if anything that just deals with a certain type of Shia expansion that had gone on. And really gaining an understanding of who those people are and the political dynamics because, again, it is the politics of patronage in this type of environment which is so key to understanding.*

*And even if we may not have an effective plan to combat this or address it, understanding it and being able then to handle it or address it through other means, be it other political means, military means or something like that, is something to be engaged in. One of the things that I think could also be considered is limiting our funding, or stopping it. We’re so—we remain so fixated on standing them up that we’ll just keep throwing the money at the issue when really part of it might be to halt it if there are, not just instances of abuse like we saw with the commandos, but also just an expansion or a utilization of the police or any other type of security forces which really, kind of, contribute to a destabilization of the security force themselves or other types of political types of balance.*

SCHER: I wonder if I could just ask you to, I mean I guess, not talk about what happened, but ideas for what could have been done. So you're operating in this environment where you have low information about applicants. Were there any strategies you were thinking of, you know, "if only we could get this into place we'd be able to screen people better." In some cases we've heard of community input being solicited for individual applicants, so a picture will be posted saying, you know, "do you know anything bad about this person? Call this anonymous number." Were there any strategies like that considered?

SHERMAN: *In the early days, there weren't. One of the things though that we pushed a lot, that I pushed, I don't mean to single myself out because it was a group effort in many ways, deals with the—and this deals with the police issue as well—is with these awakening groups. I don't know if you've been following that in Iraq, where there have been—. They're known as Sunni Awakenings or Sons of Iraq. They've been springing up. They sprang up quite a bit throughout central and northern, in the country, about 100,000 of them. And there was an effort, and there still is an effort, to try to get some of them in the police forces and also build up some of the police forces in areas, in Baghdad particularly, that are supposedly deficient in police. There was an effort to like—all right, we need 25,000 more police for Baghdad. We need 5,000 here and 5,000 there. And I go, "this is not an issue of you need numbers of people." Military is hung up a lot on—you know, the counterinsurgency manual, in that you need one police officer in a counterinsurgency environment for X thousands of people, whatever it is.*

*In my mind, you can have 100 people, if they're the wrong people it's going to contribute to problems. A lot of them are fixated on the ratio, for better or for worse. I say, you know, if we're going to do anything, we've got to make sure that the people are literally from that area and have been from that area, not something that has just happened over the past year or two because what we*

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*would be doing in my mind— Or what had happened over the past two years, and this was, again, really from 2006, 2007, there was a mass Shiification of Baghdad. It happened for a number of reasons. If we were then to solidify that Shiification a lot, or expand it, we would focus just strictly on numbers. And it was more important to try focusing on individuals that were willing to serve there as policemen that had been there for a number of years, and not had just gotten there or taken part in this expansion. Being able to try to use identification cards such as their 2005, January 2005 election cards, or ration cards, as forms of ID. And that we shouldn't get fixated on recruiting or supporting or funding or providing training to these individuals unless we were able to provide that type of background.*

*Now, could they be involved in other types of, have been involved in other types of nefarious activities? I suspect so. But my concern, and the argument that I was making, was that we didn't want—we wanted to get away from the numbers, try focusing on people, the population that are from the area and had been there for a length of time, who have a vested interest in protecting that neighborhood, in addition to the then-adopted retinal scans and things like that that people did. Because that— I don't think there will be any way of reversing the Shia expansion. I'd be pleasantly surprised if it happened. But it's one thing to at least try to not further contribute to it.*

SCHER: And how was that suggestion taken?

SHERMAN: *It was, it was, to say, it was generally then adopted as 'only hire local individuals with identification cards in 2005' and it was something that was being adopted. It's always difficult to then get the granularity on whether such a policy is actually being followed, because there is just such pressure on people to produce X, produce some form of security, some semblance of security. And while you might be able to achieve such for the short-term, on a localized level, it could contribute, and has contributed in many ways, to a massive destabilization in the medium to long-term.*

SCHER: Another thing you mentioned was a frustration at the drive to recruit rank and file as opposed to leadership positions. Could you talk a little bit more about that?

SHERMAN: *You should talk with a lot of—I don't want to speak for General (David) Petraeus or any of the folks— but I think, and this is a very broad generalization, and so I may be wrong in this. Is I think the military, with the standing up of MNSTC-I (Multi-National Security Transition Command Iraq) and the military taking the primary role in training and equipping the security forces and a lot of the police, I think the military equated that if you're able to recruit someone in the security forces, they'll be somebody like our police. They'll be somebody like who is in our military, someone who is dedicated to their country. Not necessarily in types of their capabilities, but in just their loyalty to country. Because I think that is such a deeply embedded value, quality that our military has. And I think, I could be wrong, but I think that principle may have been just regarded as a given. Because it is such a part of the U.S. military fabric.*

*When that is not the case, in a state that is coming out of war or still in war—. Because a lot of the NCOs (non-commissioned officers) and the rank-and-file guys that are in the U.S. military, love of country, and it is unquestioned. It is so rare that you ever have any problems with that. That's not the case though in this type of environment. And I think that they were thinking that if you're able to develop a lot of these people that can then fight for their country, that they will provide sustained security. I think that was somewhat of an overlooked part.*

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*Also, I think— again, they were so interested in getting this stood up quickly, stand them up quickly so that we can get out of Dodge that the type of then time that it would take to then develop those mid and senior-level officers really wasn't as emphasized, because of that urgency to get out, to stand up and get out.*

*And what Iraq is, and what many Middle Eastern countries and other countries as well, as you well know, they're leadership-driven societies. No one does anything without then their higher up and higher up and higher up signing off. It's very leadership driven. That's why, ministers, and the prime minister had to sign off on a host of just piddly little things all the time. That's why I think it is important to make sure you have, then, a greater emphasis on mid and senior-level training. And that was something that we tried to do a lot with the establishment of Adnon Palace which was bordered on the IZ (International Zone) which had an entrance outside the IZ and also inside, which we initially wanted to establish as kind of like a Quantico or Carlisle [The FBI Academy is located on the United States Marine Corps Base at Quantico, Virginia. The U.S. Army War College is located at Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pennsylvania] for Iraq. It would be a very, a proper facility where people can go to get this kind of training, extensive training, which allowed us to get people in quickly into the facility because it had that rear entrance, guarded, protected and all this other stuff. But it just allowed for greater mobility to try to really kind of encourage people to come in. And it was adopted to some degree. But the vast, vast majority of time, effort and resources was on rank and file training. And I'd always think, like the 30,000 in 30 days, I'd be interested in knowing where those folks that were trained in the early days are now, because— Saddam had a police force of, again, this is we think, about 60,000. We then, during the CPA days, were angling towards a force of about, I recall, about 85,000. Petraeus then wants to do to then 135,000. And now you're up to a security force, an MoI, that's not just police, but national police, borders, and other sorts of close to 500,000. I mean it's un-, un-believable. It makes you wonder what's wrong with—you don't need 500,000 people, you need the right people to do this. You can have a million people and if they aren't— if they're people that are going to contribute towards, or act in a politically advantageous manner for political purposes or whatever, you can keep pumping them out and it ain't going to mean anything.*

SCHER: Can you talk a little bit about the specifics of the type of training that was offered, firstly for the rank and file and then secondly for the mid and high level that you were involved with?

SHERMAN: *This was something— there are other people that you've talked to, I know Carr Trevillian helped out a lot on that. I'm not a policeman, I did not take part. I helped out a little bit in that, but I generally left that to people that knew those topics much better than I did. I just learned from them, just sitting around, and like "oh, that's what you..." and all this other stuff. Initially it was certain eight week programs, I think it then went to ten weeks, twelve weeks, back to eight weeks. I don't remember the time, but that was generally it. But part of the process though was not just trying to come up with a training program, but come up and work with the Iraqis in developing one. That's more than coming up with a training program and getting the proverbial Iraqi buy-in on a training program. That doesn't mean crap. It means working with them to develop a training program where you work with their people that have done this sort of thing before in the past. You have a greater understanding about what types of training initiatives have been done and how to then change and modernize them and stuff like that. It is not necessarily coming up with a coalition-developed plan and then talk with them over the course of three or four meetings and get their*

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*approval. And that was something that takes a great amount of time and is a challenge.*

*Because you're constantly pushed—well, what's the training program, what's the training? And you go "well, you know, we've got to work with the Iraqis in developing a proper, one that is going to be utilized by them, that is going to stand the test of time." And anything that we provide on our own is going to be "thank you very much, that's nice, that will go over here then, thank you," and then they'll go back and do whatever they were doing before and you lose any type of opportunity to help influence that process. And recognize that, you know, you're not going to get your training program in there as you like but to say, all right, you're going to get the 60% solution and that's damn good.*

*Pick your battles; prioritize really what you want to focus on, where the deficiencies really rest. You're not going to get the entire package but too prioritize where you want to, what you really want to have in there at the end of the day, as opposed to just blanketing with certain types of things that may work well in other countries but not necessarily there.*

SCHER: So clearly for at least the 30,000 people in 30 days and those, there wasn't much or any evaluation of the success of the training programs?

SHERMAN: *Again there was, the 30,000 in 30 days training, again, that was stuff that happened before—what was happening was that you were having ad hoc types of training of various degrees, be it a few days or a few weeks, that was going on by the MSCs, the Multi-Subordinate Commands, in the various provinces and neighborhoods. It wasn't uniform. And that was something that was frustrating us as we learned bits and pieces of, and it greatly frustrated the Iraqi leadership because they were like, what is going on? Who are these people? Do we know what we're doing? What weapons are you giving them? This whole sort of thing. And this was all the reason why you had the (G. John) Ikenberry team come out, I want to say in February or so, February or March, which really looked at the whole training, equipping function across the board and which then led to the eventual establishment of MNSTC-I a few months later*

SCHER: So, I guess what I'm trying to get at is, even at the later stages, how could you get an idea if the types of training programs that were being put in place were actually producing results on the ground?

SHERMAN: *There was feedback that people provided, that Iraqis provided. And then there was then follow-ups by police trainers and police advisers that then went out, civilians, that then went out, that were embedded with military units to then follow up and see how these recruits were working. Where that program rests now, I'm not sure. I know that there are a lot of embedded military teams with them as well. To what extent the civilians are involved at this point I don't know. But it was something that was also a real issue of contention in DC about how many civilian police trainers are necessary. And again, if you take the equation of what was used in Bosnia, I don't remember the exact ratio, but if you're going to equate it to then a population like Iraq you need something like 6,000 folks and that was something that was not feasible in terms of cost and timing. So that number continuously got whittled down, whittled down, whittled down.*

*And I remember it reaching a high, maybe close to a thousand, between 800 and 1,000, I think. I haven't thought about these numbers in a while. But it was something that was brought in later in the game. It wasn't necessarily something that was able to hit the ground running, be it right after the war or be it early in*

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*2004. It was something that came in trickles and spurts and things of that such, let alone then whether you're then able to get quality folks that would be able to carry out the types of tasks that are necessary because it is definitely—Baghdad is not Arizona.*

SCHER: [Laughing] Can we use that as a sort of key quote from the interview?

Yes, sure, I can only imagine. One of the things you mentioned a little while ago is community-based policing and I was wondering if that was something that was integrated into these training efforts or something you were involved in?

SHERMAN: *That was definitely an approach. It was something that we really tried pushing a lot on, with Petraeus and his staff. Because our concern was that—again, you're caught in this situation and it is a balance that you need to try to reach. So again, this is not to— it's not pointing fingers at anybody, but this is to, just kind of put in context the types of challenges that you have. You have a police force that is not, is historically not a community-based police force as we know it. You have a force that, again, back in early 2004, that was under heavy attack, because they were one of the few if not the only remaining security force that was around to engage in the fight. They were not trained to do that, they were not equipped to do that sort of thing. And then you had military take over a lot of the training and equipping.*

*And there was that push. They were like, well, they need to be better prepared in order to deal with the fight. And in a way they're right, they're absolutely right about that. But there is the concern about militarizing the police. And you want to—of course your end result is to build a community-based policing system, but you have a military threat generally that is being waged, without a military. What we tried to push, and it wasn't really adopted that much, was to have slightly altered training programs for police that came from, then, different areas. Because the whole country isn't necessarily in war, it is in certain areas. And certain areas that would be likely flashpoints of violence for the foreseeable future, and try to tailor the training programs accordingly like that. It was easier said than done. But that was one type of accommodation that our office was putting forward to try to— saying, yes, all right, things are falling apart in X but over here and in many other areas it's fine. Why don't we then put a greater emphasis on traditional community-based type of policing in these areas, try having some of those fundamental principles here but understanding that they'll have to go through more weapons training just because of the threat that they face. And again, that worked a little bit but I think it is something that—as I like to, there's always room for improvement.*

SCHER: Yes, I mean, that sounds like an overwhelming task to try to tailor numerous training programs.

SHERMAN: *Right, well, again you don't want to have six different things. I think, and what we were advocating for, was having three different ones.*

SCHER: So sort of three different models depending on—?

SHERMAN: *Three different models, but, all with, of course, a community-based policing theme, but you were being pushed by a lot of the military folks for more military-type of training. One, it's because that's where their focus is. I mean, these are—and again, this is not to critique the military, to criticize the military. They're coming at things from a certain approach, a certain mentality. There are pluses and minuses that come with that. But, militarizing the police was something that*

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*was a concern of ours. And while you didn't want to make any of the police military folks, I also understood that some of them needed to have greater weapons and combat-like type of training because of the environment that they were in.*

SCHER: The actual training that was being given, was that done mainly with international trainers cooperating with Iraqis, or—?

SHERMAN: *Yes, mainly international trainers. I don't know what it is now.*

SCHER: Just a, sort of, fairly random question but something we're interested in, the language of the training when you have these internationals was done in what? Done in English and then translated?

SHERMAN: *I think that was it. Then there was a whole train-the-trainer type of initiative and things of that such. Which helped to some degree. What got lost in translation I wasn't quite sure.*

SCHER: Were there any things that you heard of, just small initiatives, that were quite cost effective? In the sense that a lot of these training programs are often very expensive, you get international people out, and— like, we've heard of examples in Sierra Leone of training a local guy and putting him on a bicycle and sending him out to remote stations. I know the contexts are very, very different, but those are the types of things we're interested to hear about. Any sort of small things that actually worked quite well?

SHERMAN: *I'm sure there are, I'm trying to think of anything in particular that I remember. Nothing comes to mind.*

SCHER: Sure, sure. So, I was wondering if we could talk a little bit about internal management systems, which I assume you had some experience with working in the Ministry of Interior. One of the things we were interested in was creating things like incentive systems for people, for rank-and-file guys to do their job well. Were there any things like that discussed, sort of bonus pay or—?

SHERMAN: *There was lots of contention early on with how much these guys were going to get paid, and whether their pay would be comparable or different from the military, and hazard duty pay that they would get. And then also then pay that the families would get if a policeman is injured or killed. And that was something that we focused quite a bit on. We didn't want to create unneeded competition, and so I believe the army and the police pay were very, very comparable. This was again back in '04 and '05. Again, I don't know how things have changed.*

*But we really set up and did everything we can, particularly with the martyrs payment program. Because what we were seeing were police officers and policemen taking the brunt of casualties, more so than anybody else, anybody else: coalition, any other type of Iraqi force, at rates that really kind of surprised us. And it was really at a point when also the image of the police was changing. Again, historically regarded as a security force that wasn't held in high regard but really, kind of, particularly in 2004, mid to late 2004, the image of the police really kind of skyrocketed, because people saw for the most part that these were the men that were taking the brunt of the casualties. And people saw them in a much different light. And so we did everything we could to make sure that if there were casualties that then, that they got priority to make sure that money got to them.*

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*And we worked a lot with the Deputy Minister of Interior at the time, in charge of finance, and she kept out on that.*

SCHER: Just more generally what were the types of management problems that the police force faced?

SHERMAN: *Well, the biggest problem, the biggest problem by far, and this is something that has now been addressed, but the problem that we had was having a Ministry be able to deal with such a huge influx of individuals. And really— I mean, the vast majority of my time, not the vast majority, a lot of my time, was focused on trying to just get the Ministry to react to this just influx of individuals that were coming in. And who is getting paid, and who isn't and— just, just unbelievable. And you're just putting fires out, like crazy, the entire time and not— because you've got a staff of ten, you know, and you've got MNSTC-I and CPATT—Civilian Police Training Team which have got a much much more— and they're just cranking out people, a thousand every few weeks, thousands every few weeks. And you're just like—it was unbelievable.*

*And we prided ourselves on being embedded with the Iraqis, and the Iraqis are like, where are all these people coming from? type of thing. Because you just had this drive to get all these people stood up. There was a shift, in late 2005, there was a shift to then have MNSTC-I also deal with the ministerial transition—you know, developing the ministries, which they've put in hundreds and hundreds of people to deal with both MOL and MoD, to focus on these things. That sort of attention or focus should have been an earlier one. That's something that we— when we were transitioning from CPA to State, people were asking us, so, how many people do you need to deal with on the ministerial development? An we put in a very detailed position-by-position manning document and request for, I think, 256 people that we would need in order to help get the Iraqi ministry on par with the amount of individuals that would likely be coming in, because they're going to be overwhelmed. We got 15. That was that.*

SCHER: So you were working with 15 people?

SHERMAN: *Fifteen people and it fluctuated, again, for the next year and a half, from eight to about twenty. So you're just like—.*

SCHER: Can you give me an example, no matter how small, of the types of fires you were putting out?

SHERMAN: *Literally fires. Literally fires. Literally riots that broke out in training facilities and the minister having to get involved and the deputy minister having to get involved at the Baghdad academy. It's a whole bunch of stuff. And you're just like— compounded then with other political goings on, other types of attacks that are happening, other types of security issues that are going on. And you're just like, what is going on here? Having people, in MNSTC-I, why isn't so-and-so getting paid? Why aren't they getting their equipment? And you're just like— it is beyond the capacity of the ministry.*

*Why can't the Iraqis have a system to distribute the weapons that's going on? I go "well, you know, they had a system in place to deal with 60,000. A lot of those folks have left. It's not like they can't do it. It's not like they haven't done it before. But the fact that you're asking them to do it at then a rate that is eight times as much"— that's the part of the problem, and that's where the massive disconnect happened and why the ministry has just become overwhelmed. And also was a*

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*source of vast amounts of corruption, because there's just all this stuff that is coming in with very little accountability.*

SCHER: On that note of corruption, were there any initiatives on— well, I guess there's sort of the ministry-level corruption, were there any initiatives to try and enforce some accountability?

SHERMAN: *Yes, and there actually was, there was internal affairs, and Inspector-Generals for the ministry itself established. There was a big push to do that during the second minister that I advised, trying to set that up. That was in mid 2004. It's tough. Again with the changing of ministers, again with people getting assassinated, and just trying to encourage, let alone establish, a type of office like that, which really is a new concept in many ways, and which is in many ways being perpetuated because of your contributions. In a sense the fact that we're pushing so much into the system it is just perpetuating that problem.*

SCHER: What about petty corruption at the bottom of the pyramid?

SHERMAN: *Sure, you heard a lot of that stuff.*

SCHER: Were there any initiatives in particular to handle those sorts of things that you were aware of?

SHERMAN: *Not that I was aware of. I'm sure there were, but I just wasn't aware of anything.*

SCHER: What about basic record keeping and personnel files and those types of things, were there problems with that side of things?

SHERMAN: *Yes, I mean, because everything is paper based. The same thing on our side, too. People change. There's little overlap. There's loss of any sense of continuity or knowledge gained and you just exacerbate that. The same type of problem on the Iraqi side, many, many fold, with regards to different governments, different ministers, influx of individuals that people are just like going, who are they? And I'm sure there's stacks of names of individuals that are on the payroll somewhere, it's in the pile somewhere, and if it doesn't have a stamp then it won't be looked at type of thing.*

SCHER: Staying on this internal management theme, were there any attempts to redesign promotion systems?

SHERMAN: *Early days there was trying to come up with, in early '04, what the hierarchy would look like, not only just within the Ministry which was restructured with each new Minister, but also the just of the forces themselves. And that was something that was worked on a lot with the CPA office and the Minister and Deputy Minister for Police Affairs, of trying to reestablish some type of hierarchy. Which was adopted, I believe it still is being followed today. Which then, you know, engaged with pay and then uniform and rank and all that other stuff.*

SCHER: Were there any attempts to insulate the promotion system or make it in some sense apolitical or nonpartisan at least so that people would be promoted based on merit?

SHERMAN: *Yes, that was definitely a focus, merit-based promotion. But it is tough to get away— a lot of it is time-based as opposed to just merit-based. Part of it, with regards to trying to come up with some sense of accountability, was, I was talking about these commandos before, was getting them out of a direct line right*

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*to the Minister and not being incorporated within the Ministry. That was something we tried to do but was really never truly adopted, particularly during Naqib's time because they were his creation and he had his uncle, literal uncle, who ran them. And so it was a very straight line. Because what we were trying to do is have them to become part of the Ministry, and there to be that type of support structure that was there. That was done a little bit under the next Minister. I'm sure that has changed a lot since then, I suspect it has. But that was always something, so that there would be more type of accountability in ministerial involvement in the commandos or national police. Because we always thought that was—it became overly political, with just the Minister directly involved.*

*But you had that historically, though, within Iraq. You have that going on a lot right now with (Nouri al-) Maliki wanting direct control over certain Special Forces elements. It is how the Special Republican Guard were established. They were directly answerable to Saddam; they didn't fall under the Ministry of Defense. So you have these consolidations of power that happen. It is, in many ways, naturally prevalent in these environments where you're still trying to—there's still so much political capital to be gained. It is unknown how long you might be around. So it kind of contributes to that environment of gaining, consolidating as much power, particularly armed forces, as much as you can. It's just, you know, your power is gauged by the size of your gun, in many ways.*

SCHER: So, I mean, that must have been a very hard sell to try to sell to the minister, how—

SHERMAN: *That's something that, again, it was a nonstarter in many ways under Naqib, something that was somewhat adopted a little bit with Byan Jabr but I left so I don't know how that all changed. Again this goes to a point that I don't know how— whether we used our resources as— being dexterous enough as we could have been, in the sense that we just kept providing stuff. And could we have then said, look, we're not going to provide X, we're going to withhold this, in order to try and get certain types of concessions, in order to halt our involvement in certain types of activities, certain types of units, not only at the strategic level but also at the tactical level where a lot of these embedded trainers were involved in.*

*When you saw a nefarious activity, going, you know, we're not going to support this any more. And again, we were, and I still think we are still so fixated on, "if we just provide more stuff it will get better," type of thing, when really halting that involvement, not training those individuals, not giving the political legitimacy by our involvement with them, not giving them equipment, may be the best course. Now, can they get equipment in other areas? Yes, perhaps so, but there are ways of being able to limit their effectiveness. And I don't think we've thought through those applications as much as we could.*

SCHER: Are there other things that you think that the international actors in Iraq working in this area of police reform could have done better? I mean this is controlling or using resources...?

SHERMAN: *International actors, what do you mean by that?*

SCHER: The people who were there. You've got all these different, like you mentioned the Canadians, all the people who were there. Is there a way—I mean the people actually on the ground, doing this work. Were there things you observed that you thought, well, actually this could be handled differently, or this could be handled better. How that sort of engagement works, it's often a critical area.

*SHERMAN: I wish there were more of them. The Brits had a relatively significant size, meaning four or five, type of thing, and they provided real insight on things. I thought some of the forensics work that, again, the Spanish were providing in late '03, early '04, was critically important, but it was not prioritized early enough. It is now something that the Brits are doing quite a bit of, and I think it is something that there is a real, real benefit of, particularly, as I was saying before, about making sense of who gets killed and why certain individuals get killed. There is a reason why. This person is not getting dumped off in this part of town for just sectarian reasons, there is a specific reason why.*

*And again, during my last tour there, we kept seeing body dumpings happening in certain areas. While we weren't able to—I was like, “you know, this is happening all over town, let's try focusing on this one specific area.” We were able then to eventually track it back to a small set of police stations, which was more or less going out, getting people, then detaining, torturing, whatever, killing them in a certain area, in a police station, and then going out and dumping them in a certain area. And so you're able to piece that—now that might be happening in other areas and other stuff, but there is a location where that is happening in. So we were able to piece that together and address it.*

*But there were reasons why those things—there was intimidation that was going on in certain areas. I mean, many reasons why—this might be a little bit off the thing, is that, you know—everyone made big goings on about the walls that were set up all around Baghdad in Adhamiya and things like that in order to separate people. That was what it was publicly regarded as. And it wasn't necessarily that case. The reason why—and these walls, they were concrete walls which, you know, you could go through, you could slither through or whatever. And some were 6 feet, some were 12 feet high whatnot. The essential reason why we were doing that was to—was an attempt to limit or restrict body dumping. Because body dumping at that time was one of the primary means of intimidation which was also contributing towards Shia expansion and getting people out.*

*And if you're able to put up these walls, it's going to be a lot harder to throw a body over the wall than it isn't. And that was the reason for a lot of this stuff. And, it's making sense of where all of these actions originate in certain areas, and trying to piece it together. Now, were we able to find out who actually was getting killed. No. But it would have been fascinating to find out who those individuals were and what their ties were. Just like, I mean, I'd put a lot of effort into those individuals who were detained in the Jadiriya bunker back in November of '05, at finding out who those individuals were. It wasn't a sectarian thing. It was the vast majority of those folks that were being held in the bunker by security-led commandos were former regime fighters that were involved in the putting down of the Shia uprisings following the first Gulf War. There's history in all this other stuff and there's targeting that goes on. It's a very specific type of action, and many times we miss it, so you don't necessarily get to the heart of things.*

*And it is being able to try to build up, again, these forensic capabilities and greater understanding of those, where the Iraqis can take the lead and we can also gain insights on what really is happening on the ground.*

*SCHER: Just a quick follow up question. You mentioned this set of police stations where they were actually torturing people. And you said the you were able to address the issue then. How would you go about addressing an issue like that, where you have the police actually acting—you've uncovered the police acting as these sort of agents, what would be the process?*

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- SHERMAN:** *It's coalition involvement; it's certain types of raids. It is informing Iraqi leadership. It was not necessarily doing it in a unilateral way, it was doing it with certain type of intelligence that we'd been able to gather and working then with other types of leaders in a quiet way so that it wouldn't then leak out and cause problems. We would then go with another unit, an Iraqi unit, and then detain them, those that were involved with it.*
- SCHER:** But I mean from a Ministry of Interior perspective, disciplinary, you know— I'm not quite sure what I'm driving at here.
- SHERMAN:** *How they were then dealt with within the Ministry?*
- SCHER:** Exactly.
- SHERMAN:** *The fact that it was a U.S.-driven effort, they were then put—at least in this case that I'm referring to, were then put into U.S. custody, U.S. detention facilities. What will happen with them if they're released, or maybe they have been, I don't know. How the Ministry of Interior will deal with them, I'm not sure.*
- SCHER:** I'm keeping an eye on the time and I was just wondering if you feel like I've missed out on some questions, or there is anything else you'd like to add about your experience?
- SHERMAN:** *[Laughing] That's it, nothing more to add.*
- SCHER:** Or maybe, you know, just a sort of out there question, but, if you could offer yourself advice before January 2004 when you arrive in Iraq, looking back now, what are the types of things you would offer, you wish you had known, you wish you could have been told?
- SHERMAN:** *I wish I knew what my job was going to be when I got there, you know? I went into the job, I just knew I didn't know that much about it. I just listened. Eventually spent a lot more time listening to Iraqis and spending time with them, gaining many perspectives, and trying to piece the puzzle through their eyes. That was kind of how I viewed my role and I think the office that I worked with viewed our role. Is being able to then be that voice in the small groups with U.S. leadership of saying, "listen, if we do X, this is how the Iraqis may react, this is how this faction may react. This is where it might be good, or might be bad." And to be able to provide that type of insight. Because many times we just constantly— and it's human nature, we look at things through a U.S. set of eyes and all this other stuff. I don't know how successful I was at being able to stay, let's try looking at this, because it's going to be viewed in a different way by them. It will get manipulated, it will get interpreted, there will be rumors. And how then can we potentially react or alter our approach in order to not have those types of effects? And that's what we tried to do.*
- Because while we may intend A, many times it will be B through Z what happens and A will not be it. That's not just because we didn't try, it's just looking through a different perspective. Maybe there would be a lot more of that.*
- So that's my general two cents for whatever they're worth.*
- SCHER:** It has been very, very interesting and I'd like to thank you very much for taking time out of your day.

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*SHERMAN:* *Absolutely, absolutely.*