

United States Institute of Peace
Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Iraq Experience Project

JACEK ORZOL
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interviewed by: Larry Lesser
Initial interview date: August 9, 2004
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A 28 year-old U.S. Army specialist, Jacek Orzol is an undergraduate at Troy State University, where he is studying political science. He looks forward to completing his degree while continuing his service in the U.S. Reserves. Previously in the U.S. Air Force, Mr. Orzol has a background of being a cryptologic linguist in Hebrew. He was assigned to manage the linguist team hired for the Iraqi Assistance Center in Baghdad. Serving in Iraq from March 2003-March 2004, Mr. Orzol supervised nearly 50 translators/interpreters at the Iraqi Assistance Center in Baghdad.

The original mission of the Iraqi Assistance Center was expected to be responding to a humanitarian disaster, but no such disaster occurred. The assistance center's mission evolved to that of a support organization for NGO's and a liaison between the coalition military and the general populace.

The majority of the center's efforts were therefore coordinating assistance to Iraqi civilians. This included referring Iraqis towards other services (such as medical care) or providing direct assistance (such as fielding damage claims against the coalition). The ultimate goal of the American staff was to prepare Iraqis to take over the government/citizen interface functions themselves. Mr. Orzol notes, however, that the Iraqi Assistance Center itself would probably disappear because such a centralized institution would no longer be needed.

Baghdad presented a unique environment to the work that Mr. Orzol initiated and completed with regard to the culture of the Iraqis. He notes that some methods, such as the Iraqi Assistance Center he worked in, which were effective in one instance, could not necessarily be replicated elsewhere.

One of the major successes of Mr. Orzol's initiative mission was developing employment teams to match job applicants with opportunities from contractor firms. Working closely with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, in addition to the private sector, a job fair was organized for the Iraqis to build a new workforce. Several meetings were held in an attempt to design jobs programs. Mr. Orzol was concerned that some of the approaches were too much akin to creating a welfare-like jobs program.

Another interesting initiative was a weekly series of meetings with University of Baghdad students interested in organizing student government and politics. With the fall of Saddam's regime, these students were in search of a new political structure upon which school politics could be organized.

Mr. Orzol notes that throughout his work it was necessary to be flexible in understanding the needs of the people. American personnel could have benefited from more training about the structure of Iraqi society, especially the tribal structure and the

place of women. Such improved understanding could have greatly increased the knowledge effectiveness of US personnel in the essential task of developing a reliable local staff.

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Q: Today is Monday, August 9, this is an interview with Jack Orzol. The interview is being done on behalf of the U.S. Institute of Peace and the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training as part of the Iraq Experience Project. I am Larry Lesser and Mr. Orzol is going to base the interview primarily on governance questions.

Let me start by asking you to tell us your name, area of specialty, age, education, employer, relevant professional background, job and location of your Iraq assignment, Iraq-specific training if you had any, and your period of service in Iraq.

ORZOL: My name is Jacek Orzol, call me Jack if you'd like. I'm 28 years old, a senior at Troy State University studying political science. I'm a specialist with the United States Army; I'm a sergeant. I came into Baghdad on or about Easter Sunday 2003. That's when we started with our mission over there.

My service in Iraq was between March 2003 to March 2004. I did a little bit of school preparation before I actually went to the civil affairs course to get me ready. Other people were already qualified. I met up with the rest of my group in Kuwait, and it was then that we all convoyed up into Baghdad; that was Easter Sunday like I mentioned. Then it was March 1 of 2004 that we flew out of there.

My specific mission was providing linguist support for our unit, the 352nd civil first command, falling under the C9 cell of CJTF 7 (Combined Joint Task Force 7), which is a civil affairs specialty. [Note: Mr. Orzol was assigned to work at the Iraqi Assistance Center in Baghdad.] Let's see, I was in the Air Force. I was a Middle Eastern cryptologic linguist in Hebrew four years before, but this was from 1995 to 1999. So I have a little bit of experience dealing with Middle Eastern issues, as I had to read a lot of news and do a lot of digest and intel.

Q: Did you get any Iraq specific training prior to going out there?

ORZOL: We had two briefings; cultural briefings. I'm sure the briefings that they're offering now are much more in depth, provided all the lessons learned that they had the first and second time going at it. The second rotation should be coming back soon.

Beforehand I think we tried to imagine what we were going to experience. A country book was available and we were able to study that a little bit. It gave a lot of demographic information; information about the weapons systems that are used. That's pretty much it.

Q: In the area where you worked, describe to the extent that you are familiar with it; how national, local or provincial governance was organized during Saddam's regime.

ORZOL: The thing that I observed the most regarding structure in the old regime is that people would work for a government department and from there that's where they owe all their allegiance, it seems. There was no real mobility, I think, between jobs.

Q: Describe relations between provincial and local governments with the central authority. Now you were actually assigned in Baghdad, were you not?

ORZOL: Yes.

Q: So when we refer to provincial governments, that probably doesn't apply to your own experience?

ORZOL: No, not really. I'm trying to give you the answer how I saw the people. And in our country, we have some type of workforce mobility. We have kind of a professional based workforce. You could be an accountant and work for a private enterprise or a government or anything. But your professionalism is where you define yourself.

I was thinking that in the old regime, I just had this feeling that people define themselves by who they worked for more so than what they did. And that seemed to be an overwhelming characteristic. Later, if you wanted to get something done, you of course curry favor with the right person. And that's how the relationships seemed to work. The reason I could say that is because I employed about 45 to 50 people, and they were all Iraqis. And I established a certain structure of leadership within them.

Q: Were they interpreters?

ORZOL: They were called interpreters, but we actually define their roles a little further and allow them to be case workers for people that came in; Iraqi citizens that came into our assistance center to seek help from the government. And I'll have to tell you more about that later. But getting back to defining how, where people gave their allegiance, within that workforce, I noticed a lot of currying of favor.

In fact, the people that would come in seeking help from our quasi government service center (A) tried to curry favor with the case workers; and (B) case workers tried to maybe bully the Iraqi citizens into certain positions, I suppose. Some would try to bribe money or get money from the people that were trying to help and that's something that we watched out for.

So getting back to the main point, I think that supports my observation of how I saw the people in the relationship with the government, their work, and how things were organized during Saddam's regime. And that would be a statement that supports their common wisdom. All of Saddam's al-Tikritis were in charge of government. And I suppose Saddam demanded ultimate loyalty from them because he gave them the ultimate favor.

Q: The ultimate favor being...?

ORZOL: Given a job or position. So of course that doesn't lead to professional reports. I've got another interesting anecdote I can give you later about that and I'll remark about it too.

Q: Any observations about ethnic representation in the Saddam regime workforce that you could observe?

ORZOL: I observed religious distinctions. Ethnically, it was more of a religious divide than ethnic *per se*. So, I had a lot of Shias working for me; a lot of Sunnis. I had Sabians, which is a religion that follows John the Baptist.

Q: So are they Iraqi Christians then?

ORZOL: They're Iraqi civilians, they're like Christians. They consider themselves to be brothers of Christians. I wish I knew more about them; it's an interesting sect.

Q: Now when did you say, trying to respect the distinction between Saddam's regime and your own workforce, from where did you recruit the people you supervised? Had they been bureaucrats in Saddam's regime -- obviously minor level, not Baathists...

ORZOL: I think that we had a pretty broad pool to recruit from. I didn't have to do very much work; Titan Corporation, which is the Army contractor for linguists in the theater, had an office over there and there were thousands of people that were ready to translate. So a person like myself could go to the Titan office and say that they're looking for a person of this capacity or ability or whatever and even other language abilities too.

They would be able to provide that resource. And very often, I was able to go into the pool itself and interview people individually; and if they met my criteria, then I could take them that very day. They would become mine to take care of and then I would reconcile the payroll for Titan. So Titan was the paymaster, so to say, and I would be their functional supervisor.

Q: Did you do background investigations of any kind or did Titan do background?

ORZOL: There was a little cell attached to what Titan was doing and there is like an Army counterintelligence team. And they did, I think, a single scope check and then they try to get another scope later, like after six months or so. And I saw that they were

weeding people out here and there. And of course, we had to maintain a little bit of vigilance and I had to get rid of a few people because of their suspicious activities.

Q: And so that's a separate category from their professional competence, for example?

ORZOL: I would say so, yeah. I can give you an anecdote, and I want to say it because it's kind of close to having just said it. Later when we set up a work program, employment program, we called it the employment team. (We can go back later, how that started and came about.) I started working with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs along with one woman that worked for them.

Q: An Iraqi woman?

ORZOL: An Iraqi woman, yes. It was part of our cooperation that she was in our office. I'll tell you about the cooperation later. There was a contractor sitting in front of us and he was talking about certain skill sets they needed. And she made a comment that kind of alarmed me. It was that because of the sanctions, Iraqi workers and Iraqi students are more clever than without sanctions. She was alluding to low tech-ness of the universities.

One employer was asking about how well the universities could have trained the students without having modern equipment or modern methods to teach. She said in spite of having those modern methods and techniques or even modern journals to refer to, that the students were more clever. And I thought that was a witness to them trying to show that they are good. But kind of a sample of the old mindset coming through. It's not professional, it's all about henchman-ship I think.

Q: I want to clarify it just a little. There's probably a piece of vocabulary that could say it, but they are good at working the system.

ORZOL: That seemed like a sales job, but working the system, she wanted to demonstrate that Iraqis were good in spite of the sanctions, which is fine. I'm not against that; it's the cultural pride.

Q: But could it also be, in a totalitarian state people learn how to take care of themselves? They learn what they had better not say and who they can be more candid with and who less candid with. And in that sense, people can be very clever. And it's not connected to how skilled they are.

ORZOL: That seems to make sense. In a professional sense she should have, as an administrator for the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, she should have been in a position to say, well, maybe not in front of the contractor per se, but she should be interested in getting those journals, in getting modern materials for the universities, things like this, instead of trying to sell your weakness. I don't think she recognized what she was saying. She was saying the journals didn't matter, just take the employees, just take the low skilled people.

I'm probably not hitting ...

Q: Well, it would be nice to really sharpen this, but I think I'm getting the point that you're going towards. -- that the criteria they were using didn't actually correspond to high levels of skilled people who could be very productive, who could carry out a mission. It had to do with managing to take care of themselves; to be kind of petty bureaucrats.

ORZOL: Petty bureaucrats. It was...superficial. There are lots of degrees offered at the University of Baghdad. Are any of them worth a damn? Probably not at this time.

Q: Right, so if you were interviewing a recent graduate of the University of Baghdad for a position that required very high levels of skill as a researcher, as a scientist, something like that, you're suggesting don't expect to find it in these people. They haven't got the training for it, they didn't have the resources for it, those were not the standards that were used at the University for people to get a degree.

ORZOL: I would argue that.

And of course I don't have...I didn't work specifically with education. But a lot of the issues we were working on in the labor ministry side -- of course, I didn't work directly with the ministry, however I worked alongside them in order to stand up our employment team center.

One of the issues we were dealing with was making sure we could provide skilled labor for contractors coming over. This even went down to skilled bricklayers. And then we were trying to figure out how we were going to offer this training throughout the country on a countrywide level.

But the problem was a lot of contractors could have come in and they could have taken labor from other countries around. That wasn't what the intention was for the contractor. They wanted contractors to come in, utilize local Iraqi labor so they could kill two birds with one stone. Empower the people to rebuild their own country. And that was the common thought in the hallways.

And that's what we were all working on. We're working on ways to empower as many Iraqis and to get them thinking about their own personal lives instead of seeking the alternatives. And that was our weapon.

Q: OK, but you're implying I think that they brought in a lot of cultural baggage, a generation or so of suppressing individuality that made this harder than you might expect or than it would be in our own country.

ORZOL: Right, I would never say it was a cultural thing. Iraqis are clearly talented people. But the Baathist regime seemed to have put together this infrastructure that relied on these favors, this loyalty that never did promote developing a professional atmosphere.

Q: Describe the governance situation when you arrived. But now more structurally, who in effect was in charge?

ORZOL: If you asked Iraqis, the Americans were in charge. If you ask Americans, they would probably say they were in charge too. However, I'm sure there are different expectations. I'm not sure what the Iraqis were expecting for us to do; whether it was for us to come in with ready made institutions to support them according to their imaginations, or even according to what they thought we would be accustomed to.

Nobody really knew what to expect because nobody could see what the former institutions really looked like. In fact, when we went in, we thought we were going to experience a humanitarian disaster. We thought there was going to be famine, there's going to be a breakdown of supplies or food. So at the outset there was a push to get us ready to distribute a lot of food, but that never materialized. So who was in control? I would say the Iraqis were in control of themselves. And that was clear because of the looting that happened. It was anarchy.

Q: OK, that goes to the next question. What coalition and Iraqi institutions were operating? What institutional means did you have to try to overcome tendencies to anarchy and all of the looting and situations like that?

ORZOL: I don't know really. I don't know how much we came to Iraq with in terms of ready-made institutions. The one thing that we do have as civil affairs specialists is the benefit of the posture in relation to the army in command. There were civil military liaisons between the civilians and operating military. So it's a window for us to see what's going on.

Q: So you were in that window between civilian institutions and the military authority, is that right?

ORZOL: Not necessarily. The ORHA (Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance) was in charge of that. They take over the institutions. However they did that, that's a question for them and later CPA (Coalition Provisional Authority) who ran those institutions; the various ministries. Now, civil affairs is in charge of the institution of the military. We are the institution that interfaces with the civilians.

If a civilian has a claim against the army, they should be able to come to us or we to them; they'll negotiate that. There's other things we do: we plug in with ORHA and CPA with some of our functional specialties to support rebuilding the schools, public works, governance itself; even medical issues.

But we fell under them and our specialists went in and worked with them. Now our civil military operation centers, or CMOCs, in specific areas, were those storefronts for the institution of the military so the civilians would come see us with grievances against us or

questions. We did also interface with local leaders. I'm just trying to think of more to say about that, because I didn't work at CMOC specifically.

I didn't see the intimacies of what they were doing there. I did visit a bunch of them, though. We worked at the Iraqi Assistance Center, which is kind of an unorthodox organization that was put together to give briefings to NGO's (Non-Governmental Organizations) and provide assistance to NGO's as they were coming in the country.

Q: And the NGO's were mostly non-Iraqi originally?

ORZOL: Originally, yes. A little later of course we set up mechanisms to support NGO's as they were forming up indigenously. And they wanted to become better players. They wanted to be, these indigenous players, wanted to be legitimate. So we set up and that's a lot of what Jay Bachar did. Jay Bachar has a lot of experience with NGO work. He helped write the code for the program to help legitimize these local organizations.¹

Q: A lot of what you've described sounds to me like your organization was situated between the military and Iraqi institutions and Iraqi society in general, the community in general, to provide a means for communication between those entities.

ORZOL: Right, I suppose there were a lot of holes. We could probably talk about those holes. There's like a, the tribal affairs. I should probably try to dig up a name of someone who can really give good commentary on tribal affairs.

For tribal affairs, they'll just say that in Baghdad I'll have 45 translators. They come to work and they dress in a reasonable manner, reasonable professional manner like you and I: shirt and tie, coat. But it's a secular atmosphere, there's a lot of problems; people are very respectful of each other. It's not exactly Western, but it's very comfortable. Now when you go out to the country, so to say, to the tribal areas, people don't necessarily speak English or dress in Western clothes, but they still are people that need institutions and need support from the government.

So, my fear always was that everything seems fine when we're talking to people dressed like us. But when you have someone that's not dressed like us or doesn't speak our language, you almost don't know if you're helping them or not; or if you're able to design something that's going to help them.

Q: You don't speak Arabic yourself?

ORZOL: No.

Q: But you would, on those occasions, you would always have an interpreter working with you, is that right?

¹ Interviewer's Note: Jay Bachar is another person who has been interviewed for this project and I was the interviewer, so Jack Orzol knows that I know what Mr. Bachar's activities were.

ORZOL: Absolutely. We had a lot of sheiks come to our center, requesting help on behalf of their people. And that was an interesting dilemma; they were quasi-political figures that you had to deal with. It's not like I had a whole family coming to seek out the location of the brother or how they can get medical attention for their daughter.

This might be a sheik that's looking for a broader scale solution for their people. Now, we might not have even been equipped to deal with people like that. There's plenty of networking that happened. We knew how to put people in contact with more reasonable solution providers for certain problems. There were councils of sheiks and meetings, group meetings that were held all the time.

Q: As I understand, one of your functions anyway was to give people good advice as to where they ought to go if you weren't the one who could provide the response that they needed.

ORZOL: Right, we ...

Q: So if the sheik came to the Iraqi Assistance Center, you might provide him with information?

ORZOL: We did our absolute best to liaison with all appropriate ministries. In fact, we even had a person that would go to the CPA and was able, because there's an information office over there, to find a POC, a point of contact, for somebody that could take care of a specific issue. And we were the program director to that window.

We set ourselves up to where we had a team of people dealing specifically with medical issues and they would screen; take the information from Iraqi's and try to provide immediate information to how they can get a medical issue taken care of.

And that was done through referrals to the Ministry of Health, sometimes NGO's that were working in a particular area. They were able to provide a bridge between those NGO's and those people seeking help. Alternatively, we had other people on the military staff that were liaison officers with other Army elements outside the country, even, depending on what the medical situation was that could coordinate a course of action, such as a medevac, as was done a few times -- wasn't done for everybody. Not a medical referral per se, but an advance referral where they could call; someone is coming to a hospital locally to get something taken care of. So people with specific experience in the medical field, doctors, were able to lead people in the right direction. And this was done through our coordination cell.

Now, we also had a detainee issue cell. So it was like a missing persons detained information cell. And the actual Iraqis that were working it were given lists of detained individuals, where they're located, and information on how they could contact those individuals, or at least people in the prison. That was a very important service because it made connections; it was another bridge. It also empowered all Iraqis to be able to provide the source when they did the job very well. They understood the importance.

Q: I would imagine that would lend a considerable amount of credibility to the operation because that's a service that is immediately appreciated.

ORZOL: Yes, I hope it did. Another arm was the compensation cell. It was an information cell that dealt specifically with those occurrences when something happened, [i.e.] a tank ran over a car.

Q: That seems to be the example everybody gives.

ORZOL: Right, that's the academic example.

Q: Yeah, and it must have happened often enough to be realistic.

ORZOL: Well, I've seen it on the news a few times. We pointed people in the right direction of the office that was in charge of compensation. There would be an officer; they would be taking claims on Mondays or something. And so we'd give them the time and place. It was another coordination type element there.

And as far as other kinds of compensation, we had information as far as after a certain date, do we compensate this or if it was before the war was over then of course there was no compensation offer.

Q: A technical question: What was your means of communicating with these other arms of ORHA, other institutions, or NGO's? Were you using phones, emails, messengers, what?

ORZOL: Well, we were located in the Green Zone compound so at worst, if we needed to go research something, we could go physically to the ORHA, which later became CPA. And go knock on the door and talk to the person directly, which is a beautiful thing.

In fact, at times, that was more effective than trying to call or e-mail, as that is more personal. If you approach a person face-to-face with a problem, they become civil and more involved with that and sometimes provide a better solution. It was funny; sometimes I'd just stand in the hallway and after my network grew bigger, I could talk to people passing by and realize a lot of people had common issues and had impromptu meetings regarding certain issues. It was just a funny thing. It was a very tight community of people.

Q: Now, did you also maintain records of referrals that you made and did you do any kind of follow up to find out if they got what they were looking for?

ORZOL: We had a database and names and we had daily reports. So if we helped five people or ten people or whatever, those specific cases were written up. We didn't classify each case in a very rigid system. It wasn't like you could look up someone's national ID

number and see what we've done to them, nothing like that -- although I've heard of that kind of thing later with CMOC organizations being able to track certain issues.

But we never really got that far. Our reporting is really the contracting that we did. If people didn't get their problems resolved, they often came back. And that was the driver of our customer service feedback mechanism: If there were a lot of people coming back for an issue.

Q: Then you know you've got to take a look at how you're dealing with that issue and you see if you can be more effective.

ORZOL: Right, it's funny; because we actually played intermediaries to people that were demonstrating outside the convention center, it was outside the gate. Oftentimes they were sending a representative to protest not having been paid or whatever. And we would communicate or organize to go up to the appropriate ministry and often get responses, or non-responses.

But in any event, it gave people information. Our little organization provided access for an Iraqi that would not have had access otherwise into the green zone, into the convention center, and we were able to play intermediary between their issue and CPA at a pretty direct level.

I wanted to also finish the comment on what modes of communication we had. We did have e-mails and we did use e-mails extensively and we had cell phones also -- these MCI cell phones which were very good.

Q: I forgot about cell phones, taking over the world.

ORZOL: Without them I think we would have lost half of our efficiency at least.

Q: You had your Rolodex of contacts and you knew certain areas, points of contact to go to for different types of issues. And I guess you got to know a lot of the people directly as individuals. You were there for a year, so a considerable amount of continuity would develop there.

ORZOL: That was the nice thing, yes. And you find as you went along, you increasingly knew how to take care of certain issues and problems.

Q: Of course. And did you find that you also had a lot of continuity among the people to whom you were referring or from whom you were getting information? I'm thinking of the Americans or CPA people, did they have tours of duty that more or less coincided with yours and staying in the same area?

ORZOL: Did I see them for a long enough time, to be able to understand? I would say yes. Possibly not as long as us in the 11 months because I did see some people come and go, but I don't think that was a hindrance. But as long as you knew where to go, their

office, they might have left the office, but you still know what you can take care of in the office.

Q: There would be other people ...

ORZOL: Certainly.

Q: Who would certainly be there?

ORZOL: It's the institution that you grew into; the people were a little ...

Q: And these were the Iraqis, weren't they, the ones that provided the longer term continuity?

ORZOL: That was the design, yes.

Q: Would that be true in your own office, that you were beginning to develop a cadre of Iraqi employees who were familiar enough with the operation that they could break in the new Americans?

ORZOL: I think you hit it on the head with that. The Iraqis that were working in the CPA might not have felt as empowered (this is not a negative criticism, by the way). So maybe I wouldn't have gone to them for problem resolution. But a commentary on that is, I think as I was transitioning out, is that strength had been built in certain institutions and you could actually continue to rely on Iraqis in those positions. You had to because they were taking on more roles and responsibility.

That's just a lucid observation really. In terms of the organization that we ran, we wanted the Iraqis to do the work and to call the shots. And we were there intimately to guide them, empowering them as much as we possibly could to do it. So, I felt that what you said was pretty accurate.

Q: Well, I'm actually thinking of the model of my own foreign service career where in every embassy and foreign service post, you have locally hired employees who are there like civil servants except working for a foreign government for the long term. And an officer comes in and has to make decisions but can't possibly do it without relying on the people who are the long term memory; who know how we've done things before, and so on and so forth.

As of June 30, the Iraqis took back sovereignty. What is the most likely long-term future of these institutions? Can you say anything more about where you think the Iraqi Assistance Center and this system was leading?

ORZOL: I think the Iraqi Assistance Center will probably die. As much strength as I felt that we had in the local people running our center, it's not an institution that would go in

anybody's common government. It's more of an Army institution that is there to help. So I think that will probably recede while the real Iraqi institutions continue to grow.

One thing we tried to do as a concept of operation was in the absence of having a good Iraqi institution to go to, was to be able to refer someone somewhere. Like if somebody had a medical problem, you would refer them to the local hospital or the Ministry of Health, because they have all their files, or whatever.

In the absence of a reasonable institution, we provided as much support as we could in our alliance to bridge the appropriate available institutional help to assist a person with their issue. So it was like if somebody needed a driver's license, we would find where to get the drivers' license done. Or we would find out why it can't be done now and when it could be done.

We had the issue of passports actually. People were coming to get passports, and there were a series of passports that were unacceptable, a series that will expire and one that was completely invalid. And people wanted information on them; in fact they wanted to know where they could get a valid passport. So, we did the research and we posted the information.

Q: And what was the information? This interests me, both passports' and driver's licenses because they are very homely kinds of things; if the prior government disappears and the people want to do international travel or people want to be authorized to drive...

ORZOL: It was bad.

Q: So how did you do it with those specific items?

ORZOL: The drivers' license is an anecdote. I didn't have that as an issue actually. But we use that as an example for Americans to try to understand the concept, because to us, getting a drivers license is very easy, you can go through the DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles). But then when you fail to have that luxury ...

Q: Institutionally, it's very easy.

ORZOL: Right.

Q: If you know where to go, you know what the standards are and we have a certain built-in confidence that if the license is issued it means that a person has established a certain level of confidence.

ORZOL: Right.

Q: But now in Iraq, post Saddam, however they did it before, that institution perhaps is not operating.

ORZOL: Now, each ministry was rehabilitated, I'd say relatively quickly, after we took control after the war. The question was to what level of service did they return to operability. And then, another question existed, "How many people could be serviced adequately at that level of service?" So there were a lot of holes.

And of course, like I was mentioning, we had the medical cell, that was a very necessary issue to address. People with medical issues needed to get help quicker than maybe business could allow for.

[END SIDE]

Q: This is the second side of tape one of the Iraq Experience interview with Jack Orzol. The interviewer is Larry Lesser. Jack, you were talking about the means by which you were dealing with issues like not having drivers' licenses, not having passports, trying to put back together routine and non-routine medevacs and medical emergencies -- government services that were not functioning after the Saddam regime was overthrown.

ORZOL: Pretty much. Let's just say that we can move to a completion of the thought on that. But I would like to transition into the ability to do this on a large scale. And since this is a lesson to learn type of experience, one of the biggest frustrations we felt was... well, let me backtrack a little bit. We had the benefit of being in a convention center that was a very prominent location inside Baghdad.

And any Baghdadian, there were about five million of them, could have really gotten to us. At some times we would see up to 300 people a day, any day, except Friday of course. There were smaller CMOC's throughout the city, more than 10; I think about 13 of them or something.

Q: Throughout the city means not in the green zone?

ORZOL: Not in the green zone, yes. Now, Jay might have commented a little bit about the civilianization of the CMOC's; I'm not sure if he did.

Q: Yes he did.

ORZOL: That project was modeled after a lot of the stuff we were doing. Of course, there's another topic to talk about, it's the impromptu projects we came up with and the civilianization of the CMOC's as one of those impromptu projects. It was an effort to get Iraqi's into these CMOC's to run it themselves and also to marry them up with the local neighborhood councils and city councils so that governance would be, what's a good word for it, converged? Merged together, so that you have a more seamless government.

So, getting back to the frustration I felt, our project in the Iraqi Assistance Center, I felt ran pretty smoothly. But of course, that ran the smoothest; it offered the greatest benefit (A) to the people that live closest, and then (B) people that were well informed about who we were.

We didn't worry about our advertising because word of mouth really did a lot of that. A good government institution will have more than almost 100% penetration. Knowledge in the minds of their citizens and every citizen knows where to get certain things taken care of.

If you move into a different city, it's hard to replicate what you have as a model, especially a successful model, unless you physically go there and reestablish what you built. Then you risk losing if you build also. There's no, despite the fact there's manuals out there on how to do reconstruction and development, I don't think you can repeat a successful story unless you have people in there that are willing to work. So one of the frustrations is seeing a perimeter to your effectiveness.

Q: What you're saying though, I think, it might be fair to conclude that Baghdad meets a lot of conditions that don't apply elsewhere in Iraq for any number of reasons. So that a lot of the things that were successful in Baghdad, you couldn't automatically assume you could replicate elsewhere. You had, as you said, two things going for you: that people knew the location and, generally speaking, they knew how to get things done. You had a fairly knowledgeable potential clientele.

ORZOL: Right. You know what, let's qualify what I said also. Inasmuch as I couldn't see successful stories, I couldn't project our success elsewhere. I might have been blind to other successes, right?

Q: Well, sure.

ORZOL: And that's a failure of, well, it's a big country, maybe it was just a big project. As time went along, I'm sure better networks were established and more communication and more stories were shared.

Q: It's interesting that you speak so humbly there in light of one of the remarks that struck me in the recently published 9/11 Commission Report that to a very large extent, the American failure in connection with counter terrorism, is not directly related to Iraq, was a failure of imagination. And you are suggesting that maybe people could replicate successes, but they had to find their own way to do it. They would dope out what the local conditions were and then figure out what was needed in order to get this kind of liaison function and to get local institutions that ceased functioning; get them up and running again. It could be done.

ORZOL: Certainly, there's a lot to be said about it. I was most impressed by our L and O's, our land [line?] and officers and their ability to know a specific institution and then later being able to go to them as our resident expert source of matter relating to that (whatever they were assigned to take care of).

Q: I haven't heard the expression L and O's before, who were they?

ORZOL: They were military officers; they were also civilians. Basically anybody that was signed up could be an L and O. It was like saying you're going to be the expert on algebra, or the realistic example, you're going to be the L and O to the Ministry of Health.

And you know everything, if we have a question about administrative health, we're not going to go reinvent the wheel, we know that you've got it, we know that you understand the Ministry of Health. So, a lot of people will have those specifics covered. And their job will not only be to liaison with us, but also to attend meetings with different organizations in order to keep abreast of developments.

Q: And liaison implies in both directions. If we needed to get to them, yes you went to the L and O, but did the Iraqi institutions also take initiative to go to the L and O, so say, listen, we've got this issue or that issue, we need to rehab a particular part of our operation?

ORZOL: I would venture to say if it was a two way street, one way would probably be a freeway, the other way would probably be an unpaved road.

It was designed more for our information. That's my assumption. I didn't see it happen any other way as efficiently as it did our way.

Q: And any idea of why that would be the case?

ORZOL: Probably the source of design; it was our design rather than ...

Q: Not because of any built in hostility or that sort of thing?

ORZOL: No, in fact, if it were perceived that it was there for the taking, we would welcome its use. That would be a great thing to see lively communication open and synchronously running for everybody's benefit. That would be achieving our goal quicker.

I wish I could provide a good example of that. Our L and O, like I said before, is for the military. It's like you would attend our military meetings, unless anybody on the Iraqi side particularly knew about our military structure and maybe wasn't intimidated by it, there's a lot to do with that too.

Not everybody is clear, we could possibly segue into the tribal example I had.

Q: Go ahead.

ORZOL: And that speaks about cultural awareness and how each side sees each other. When we went down south on a little cultural research mission we were trying to just make contact with certain tribes. On the way we actually saw people living on the side of the road, and we stopped our two car convoy. We sent our translator, an Iraqi national

from the States; he was part of the FIFF program, Freedom Iraq Force Fighters, I think. They were utilized early on, extensively. So he was with us, we sent him out to the village and asked him if we could meet with the village.

In about five minutes, he came back with a complete list of affiliations from the tribe, all kinds of pertinent information that only that Iraqi could have gotten expertly. We would have never known how to ask to safely meet with them.

Anyway, they slaughtered a lamb and we had dinner with them and we discussed a lot of their village affairs, such as bringing goods to market, and some of the frustrations. The former regime used to provide a truck for them, now there is no truck to bring goods to market. Very, very local issues, but indeed still pertinent issues. We got a lot of information from them; I think we exchanged some MRE's (Meals Ready to Eat) or something. It was just a gesture; it wasn't that they needed any food or anything. And then we left.

Q: And was there follow up? Did they get something out of it?

ORZOL: We didn't promise anything; we heard the issue, we didn't expedite the issue, *per se*. We were doing more research as far as what types of issues existed, and I think they understood that too. We were listening to the problems they had.

Q: Could you describe in a little greater detail how many of you there were and how much of it was security?

ORZOL: At the time, this was early May or June, so our vehicle convoy procedures weren't as stringent. I don't want to comment on the exact procedures. I wasn't in charge of putting together the convoy, so I don't want to put any better information out there. We had about six people or so with us -- a driver and four of us.

Q: And, how far out in the country were you?

ORZOL: This was a little bit past Al Kut. It was on a side road; it was off the beaten path. Not [quite] in Al Kut. The tribe was called the Beni Lams.

Q: OK. And was that a unique event, or was it an example of something you did several times?

ORZOL: An example of several other meetings with other tribes and affiliations.

Q: And the purpose of that kind of meeting -- you called it research?

ORZOL: Right, I wasn't driving the research, I was actually along more for mission support. Actually learning a lot also. The scope of the mission was to do some research and to collect information about the tribes to paint a better picture of what was going on.

So, back to the old anecdote as to why it's a loose story. We were talking about institutions, oh, maybe how the tribes center in on, it seems like, a group of leadership from within the tribe, and they refer all the problems through that group.

And that group later goes and mediates solutions to their problems. And whereas you and I might be used to, as an individual, walk away from your tribe or your affiliation and go take care of your own problems, just as well as anybody else in your tribe, or your group personally could have, they might not do that (speculating a little bit).

But I sense that the central, paternal leadership consolidates control that way also. In the city, in the more secular life over there, it's more crowded and support services are available everywhere. People can much easier walk to the store than have to cooperatively get products. I suppose this is a reality of survival in the remote conditions that people live in.

Q: Did you receive adequate support, cooperation, guidance and evaluation? Of course, this implies that you had a clear idea of what your mission was, so that you know what support you need.

ORZOL: If our mission was one thing in the beginning, I'd like to say that we were able to possibly veer from the path and to adapt to what was hitting us. So if our mission was to provide support and coordination for NGO's, originally, when the NGO's filed support and coordination elsewhere, or through their own generals, even if they continue to rely on us, which some did, we were also hit with the civilians that were coming to see us and asking for help.

We adapted to support them. And then we adapted to create a mechanism by which the locals can help support themselves based on the activity that was going on. And then as the structure grew, indigenous NGO's also were popping up and they needed support. So then that was a back-ended way of saying this is who we are going to help. It was a broad stroke of the mission originally that allowed us to interpret it in many ways later.

Q: And it evolved.

ORZOL: It did.

Q: You said at the very beginning that the planning before going in was on the assumption that you should expect a humanitarian disaster and that didn't materialize. So right from the beginning, it sounds like you had a need to reinterpret what your mission was going to be in any case.

ORZOL: Clearly. Well, it was either that or sit and do nothing. So the alternative was to find yourself capably executing an interpretation of your original mission statement, which was broad anyways.

Q: And so as that evolved and as you adapted, I come back to the question did you receive adequate support? Did you receive adequate cooperation, did you receive guidance and evaluation?

ORZOL: That would be hard for me to answer. I think we spoke about this earlier. I probably couldn't comment on the level of management that drove the Iraqi Assistance Center, like our director, for example. Would he have said that we received adequate support? Maybe in some sense, yes. Maybe in some sense, no. Maybe a part of defining ourselves was aligning ourselves with people that did provide support. And that was also part of the evolutionary process.

Q: That's an interesting perspective.

ORZOL: Well, I wouldn't want to answer, in the final analysis, did we get support? Well, the programs that we did run had a lot of support. At the outset, maybe not. But then again, we also cultivated relationships between the CPA through the different ministries that drove some of our ideas.

Q: Did you have a sense that people in the CPA came to rely on you, came to you also saying, "Listen, we've got an issue and we think you're the right organization to deal with it"?

ORZOL: Not necessarily. I don't think we had the right; we couldn't service a whole nation. CPA is a national policy organization. We were more local; we're working on that kind of stuff. Me personally, with the programs that I ran, the employment team concept worked really well and wherever I went inside the CPA I went to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and private sector development teams. I received great support from them.

And this was based on relationships that were made, ideas that were chatted about, and also just direct solicitation, "Hey, I want to do this, what do you think about this?" And if you get the right support and you ask the right question, someone is going to understand your idea and realize it's a common idea so then you continue to drive along.

Q So, can you give any specific examples of initiatives that came out of this?

ORZOL: Yes, we had an employment fair in December that attracted over 500 Iraqis to come. And they were able to look through about, well, four different contractors were there offering over 100 positions. That began our little office effort to coordinate contractors and a local Iraqi workforce. And this served to benefit both the contractors and Iraqi's that were looking for possibly a one-stop shop or to find 10 engineers or 10 whatever.

Q: This would be over a wide range of different skill areas?

ORZOL: Any skill area, as many as we could get. Also for Iraqis that came, again, when they used to ask us about medical problems, we'd develop a medical capacity. When they started asking us for where they could find work, we developed a capacity to coordinate that work with the people that would be able to give them the jobs.

So then later, when we saw this thing succeeding and rising as an office, we had a lot of resumes and a lot of contractors coming in. I gave a speech at Outreach 2004 in front of a crowd of businessmen. I solicited our service more. We had a lot of phone calls coming in to our American phone number.

And we had a lot of people coming in to see us, because the convention center was also a convenient place for contractors to go. We hooked up with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in order to possibly expand our capacity to offer the contractors a more nationwide, full print of job lead searches.

And in doing so, we also opened up an avenue of conversation with the private sector development team in trying to get more contractors to come in and possibly marry up more labor resource with the new contracts coming in with the reconstruction money. So that started kind of like a three way brainstorming series of meetings to contemplate how to bring labor up to a certain standard; a European standard, an American standard, or a contractor standard.

Those are just examples of topics to talk about. Where to try to base training programs out of, whether it be the Ministry of Labor, the social affairs training offices which were being refurbished through local universities -- through training centers, through private contractors, and overall development topics that would be just hashed about. I ended up leaving before I could see a lot of answers to those questions.

But we put in position a lot of people that were discussing those issues. We coordinated specifically the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs rep to come to our office and to work with us. And I think we shared methods; we shared the way that our office went and sought out qualified leads.

We tried to make it less of a bureaucracy and more of a market-driven competitive process for finding job leads; whereas I felt the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs was creating another welfare [system]. But anyway, those were topics that were discussed.

Q: Those ministry people you were meeting with were Iraqis, correct?

ORZOL: Yes, and Americans.

Q: I'm interested in the extent to which you're joining together and the continuity is going to be picked up by the Iraqi institutions, if it works.

ORZOL: Well, after I left the cooperation was continuing; the point of contacts and employment team were Iraqi and point of contacts within the Ministry of Labor and

Social Affairs were also Iraqi. We had engaged a training chief within the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, which was Iraqi, to tell us and consult our readings.

To see what kind of advice you could give as far as trading solutions for the contractors, which were also coordinated through the Private Sector Development team (PSD) was looking for a solution that they could offer to the contractors coming in. So we were trying to create a product that would entice them to ultimately use the existing government institutions, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, to provide as many jobs as possible for the locals, as easily as possible.

Q: You say 'use the existing institution,' but they actually have to, I guess, further develop and refine that institution so that it is responsive to that need.

ORZOL: Clearly. And also, like I said before, it was run like welfare. That's my opinion, but there's also I think the feeling of people that are trying their own businesses, that they might not find it efficient in a market setting. So bringing the institution up to, at least market speed, was the goal.

That was the general gist of our discussions and meetings. But that's an example of how informal they were; there was nobody that says you have to work with these people, you have to go meet this person at 9:00. We met these people, it was clear that this institution is responsible for this activity, so we coordinated a small group of people who were interested in advancing the cause of hiring Iraqis. And there were Americans, Iraqis, and private contractors.

Q: And you were leaving in March of this year, 2004, but the hope is that institutionally you're getting something started which won't depend on an American like you being there over the long term.

ORZOL: I was impressed by the adviser of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. He actually wanted me to talk with Iraqis more. So we would do that and whenever there were common questions, we would just all sit down together and discuss them all. And it was a great effort; it was the thing to do.

Regardless if anything came up out of it, anything that was intended, I think what's important is that there was engagement. And then later, other successes are built upon the engagements. It's like raising a child. You've got to start somewhere anyways. And that's probably a lot to say. The fact that we didn't have continuity over policy execution from the very first outset, the very first goal would have been to provide food for everybody.

The next thing was to provide direct NGO support. That died down. If you maintain a silly consistency, you would just never evolve. Evolution is necessary. In fact, it's almost like you'd rather go on without the manual. Doesn't it seem that way? But then again, that would be anarchy.

Q: It does seem that way to a large extent, but institutionally that seems very ticklish. I'm a returned Peace Corps volunteer, so I love that idea. If you get the right people, you parachute them in, give them some general ...

ORZOL: Give them a hammer, give them some tools ...

Q: And tell them what you hope they can do in the broadest terms. But to build a whole large organization on that, it seems like there are formidable obstacles. But the way I hear you talking, to a very large degree, that is what you were doing.

You were put down there with some idea of a mission, but that mission turned out not to be what actually needed to be done. Once the structure was set up though, you could adapt and find that you were well adapted to do what did need to be done. And so you stayed in there and made yourselves useful.

ORZOL: Right.

Q: What were the successes and failures of your effort, and how do you measure success or failure? I asked about record keeping, for example. To me, it's an interesting question of what seems like a success to one person, it might be partly the way you frame your description. Somebody else would say, well, it doesn't amount to very much.

ORZOL: Sure.

Q: So, talk a little about the successes and failures and how do you know how to measure whether they were successes or failures?

ORZOL: I suppose I could chart your course and to see if you're going uphill; that's an ambiguous way of saying that you're doing OK. We felt, at least I thought we were going uphill. You could probably look at the difference you make in people's lives one on one, the people that you work with, the way in which they work on your projects. They are really driven, and they start doing very well.

And you see that they are at work all the time and are involved in the projects. You sometimes know that you're doing the right thing because they're very happy with what they're doing. And I know that doesn't say much for what the mission may or may not be.

Q: Well, it's hard to measure.

ORZOL: Right. I guess asking the people, we could have good people doing the wrong thing. They could still be a wasted resource. Like they could have been doing something so much more productive. But that's up to the people in charge to decide. My boss, or even his boss, would need to see that we have a more viable need for you here or there. I felt that we were doing things that were on the pretty high end of expectations. We're

jumping through every hoop we could, designing anything we needed to in order to get a project completed.

The whole concept of the employment team happened when one person came and asked for a job. And one of the people that worked for me was the one in charge; it was the last person he ever wanted to hear ask him for a job. He said these people keep on asking for jobs.

So at that point, we just put our heads together and started thinking, who has work in this town? Well, the American contractors do and will, so we just pulled out all our stops. We talked to everybody -- from Bechtel to Titan. Actually, it was driven by a publicly traded company; the American company that came overseas was developing a market there. They wanted their name held private, but you could probably look it up. Fortune 500 companies, we're working exclusively with them as our anchor client for this job fair. And as we kept on talking to them, or listening to them, they were basically saying they want to hire Iraqis. So a project was born. That's when we sought out the rest of the contractors and put together this nice little event.

Q: Just a little point about hiring Iraqis and American contractors: I know that in some contexts people have criticized the American reconstruction effort as putting money into American contractors' hands. But I presume the American contractors are invariably hiring lots of Iraqis at all skill levels including management and technical level so that they're also contributing to the employment of Iraqis and putting bread on the tables of Iraqi households.

ORZOL: I'm not a contract specialist, but I understood there to be an incentive in the contract price if a certain amount of the work was done by Iraqis. So that's just one driver of it. But I don't think the incentive was actually a motivating factor when you look at just the sheer amount of training we have to do. But I know that people were working on those issues too.

They were all issues that were out there and clearly, the people, of what I heard from the contractors, people were interested in obviously the bottom line, but they were also interested in the spirit of the law, about getting functionality returned back. Who wants to build a project that you destroy later? There's a lot more to be made later by having everybody cooperate.

Q: Besides employment teams, can you cite other more or less specific successes?

ORZOL: We worked with a group of University of Baghdad students, and they were part of an old student government structure. We still meet with them weekly because they came. So we understood them in the context of who they were. Then later we put them together with other NGO's that were more governance specific like the International Republican Institute (IRI). They were very interested in helping the University of Baghdad rebuild their student government, with a lot of educating in the process.

Q: Was the University of Baghdad in session?

ORZOL: This was January, February. Yes, they were going to school, yes. So yeah, it was really interesting putting them into contact with IRI and also with the Policy Institute for Religion and State. A representative came down and was doing some training with the students. The intent with the group was actually in being politically organized. And we were interested in helping them as much as we could. So that was the way we did, through our weekly meetings.

Q: And what was the agenda?

ORZOL: The agenda was to meet and say hi. They were a group and I met with them personally.

Q: So it would be a way to keep your finger on the pulse of a group, which was potentially important in the development, and particularly the governance of the country. They wanted to be in touch because you were in power.

ORZOL: You know, it's interesting, I'm thinking about how the network actually came about. It was the employment fair. I was looking for people with certain skill sets and I got them too, I think; I can't remember which came first. We made more contacts in the university and also put together solicitations for other contractors that were coming in seeking employment or certain skill sets.

But also, when the student group came, they were also interested in organizing again. When we met for a few times, that's when IRI came into town, well, into my purview. And I kind of handed them off to them, so that they started meeting with them more specifically and the goals of the meetings were then to organize politically within the school. Organize the school politics, or rather, the governance.

When we met originally, we were sitting and discussing ideas. We were listening to each other, a lot of discussion. And that was OK, it was OK to do that though.

Q: Say something about how security concerns affected your operations; I'm pretty sure you're going to say that security was not as serious a problem early as it became later. To what extent did you have to factor that in?

ORZOL: I had the benefit of working in the convention center, which had a company of people guarding it. And they would search everybody, check their ID's. There were a number of bomb threats in the building, which we had to evacuate for and wait hours to clear the building for. Fortunately, nothing did happen there.

I was pretty confident in the access that Iraqis had. The people that were coming in to access our center needed two forms of ID. They usually had to state their agenda but their agenda could be very broad. They need to see the IAC, they had to wait in line, but they still got in; whereas they couldn't just go to the CPA.

So regarding security, we had people with possibly questionable motives coming in, but they didn't come in with anything, so that's what we were prepared for. There were plenty of shouting matches, plenty of people that threatened people. But that was usually as high as it got.

Now, I did have some security incidents where my translators brought weapons in. And at some point, they became allowed to do that. They were allowed to bring them in through the green zone, but not through the convention center security perimeter. They were even allowed to drive with a weapon. I think one snuck one in through their car; I had to fire him later.

Q: Not directly because of that incident?

ORZOL: Directly because of that incident. I don't think he even understood what he was doing, but I was surprised to have seen a weapon sneak in.

Q: But the rules prohibited it?

ORZOL: I would have thought they did. I think everybody else knew.

Q: A little bit of a side question on your interpreters/caseworkers working for you, particularly in light of the fact you said you would assume that the Iraqi Assistance Center as an institution would die out. What's the career future for the Iraqis who were on your staff, where are they going?

ORZOL: The CMOC's in town, with their civilianization effort, provided a lot of quasi-government service people or need those types of people. I suppose throughout town there's a small margin created for people with very specific casework experience during the time of the Americans presence.

Q: And with language skills?

ORZOL: And with language skills. But by and large, they were also part of a pool of over 2,000 translators that were employed by Titan. Because they were still employed by Titan, if at any time they didn't see a future with us, they could go back to Titan with the pool and get another assignment.

A lot of the translators started working for different contracts; I think one went to USAID (United States Agency for International Development), which was just upstairs. Now I understand that the embassy has been opened up, a lot of them went to work for the embassy. And of course having an employment in our place didn't hurt their job prospects. They know where to look.

Q: But it strikes me as fairly interesting that you said in the Saddam period there was a great deal of rigidity and not much mobility. And here you're describing kind of a new

generation of the occupation period of people who do define themselves by their skills and not by their organization affiliation.

ORZOL: About the comment on Saddam's period, I'd still like to keep that as an assumption, because I never was there. But I made that assumption based on the behavior observed later. I think it would be reasonable to assume something like that. But then again, where you define yourself through your achievements based on merit instead of based on your tribal affiliation or who you know, or what kind of security risk you are...

I don't know how they judged if you were a security risk to the regime. Maybe if you ever said anything about... One of our translators, his name was Assad, he was an air force major. And he went to school in London, during the Saddam regime. He came back with all these fresh ideas, and I think he had to learn how to bite his tongue, he was telling me.

He had a lot of these western ideas that he had to learn to cope with. His brother was killed and he was kicked out of the air force. He wasn't killed nor was he tortured or anything. But after that, he's been bitter ever since. He loved the air force.

Q: His brother was killed by Saddam?

ORZOL: By Saddam, yes. So, what he was doing up to this point, I don't really know. He knows a sense of the western world and he's mad. But he could have stayed in the air force.

Q: Well, what you're saying is an example of what you would expect to find I think in the aftermath of this totalitarian regime falling. I left the question of successes and failures with that specific

[END TAPE]

Q: I was just asking if there are any failures or areas where you had hoped to accomplish more and were frustrated or disappointed in the actual outcome?

ORZOL: For me, everything was relatively successful in terms of my scope of knowledge. I'm not an Iraqi specialist. I feel that if I had known more about Iraq tribes, about personalities, maybe even about the structure of the government beforehand, maybe I could have approached the problem differently. How differently would I have done it in hindsight? I'm not sure. Actually, my mission was very specific. It was managing the linguist team.

Q: Well, in fact, a lot of what you described sort of assumes the language side of it and gets into the actual caseworker side. The substance of what your clientele brought to you.

ORZOL: Well, if I knew in the first March what I knew in the last March, I would have gone in with all of this in my mind and I probably would have tried to drive everything I

was driving later. But it's funny because I felt people that were arriving on the scene, all the CPA people, all the Army people, right after the war, were just as puzzled as I was. Everybody was learning.

People came in with different amounts of experience, but your approach to a group of people hadn't been cracked yet, given you might have known about it, you still have to meet them. You might have known about an institution, but you still have to go in and meet the personalities. You still have to try out a few good administrators. I think that's normal.

We approach the problem with no touching. It's like going out on a date with a girl. She can look great, but you don't know what she's like until the fourth date.

Q: Is there some kind of minimum period that you think you need before you become really effective and is there any kind of recommended length of tour of duty?

ORZOL: Without anybody on the ground beforehand, the longer the better for the tour, in terms of getting the bang for your buck. Otherwise, I don't think the length of tour matters after the fact. Once you've got people making face time, well, that can be argued either way also.

Q: What about when you first arrived, how long does it take before you begin to feel like you now know how to do what you were sent there to do? You know who to talk to, you know where the levers of power are.

ORZOL: Well, me being an enlisted person, it probably didn't matter too much for me. I was just doing what I was told. It wasn't until later that I might have sensed vacuums of information and vacuums of power or opportunities for me to act on. So any project I worked on was something that nobody else was touching, therefore giving me my own creative controller.

And there was plenty of that. That being said, I suppose putting a lot of people down, let's use our L and O concept. I liked that, I thought it worked well, I thought it was a great success. It's not a brand new thing, L and O is just a generic method. But having one person in charge of a base of knowledge, being able to refer to that person, is important.

So maybe a division of labor, division of responsibilities, maybe that's a key concept that we could work on. Instead of having people approach things too much so as a group or with too many dissenting opinions trying to drive a process. That's just one idea. Failures? Maybe my personal failures, I wish I knew more going into the country.

Q: Well, you know, that actually is one of the specific questions. What specific prior training or orientation would have been helpful?

ORZOL: Tribal issues, more about tribal issues. More about cultural awareness.

Q: What do you mean by cultural awareness?

ORZOL: We'll realize that some women you just can't approach and talk to. Knowing how to approach tribal elder and how to be a good guest in his company, also. It doesn't have to be something that you come out of dance class with, but it's maybe something you are at least aware that you should know about. This is not the western world. We'll have a lot of translators, people that know the local cultures.

Q: Most of your translators, I believe, were women.

ORZOL: A lot of them were, yes. Well again, going back to the secular Baghdad, that was a little bit more acceptable than in the countryside, so to say. In the countryside you couldn't just go up to a woman.

Q: OK, now, are you implying that that was something that you had to learn and that you could have learned before you were there? And it made a difference that you didn't?

ORZOL: Well, in a sense, I might have known subtleties like that before. But more importantly, that's a small base of knowledge to learn the next step, which could be another base of knowledge to learn something about tribal affairs, which is all a necessary chain of learning.

Let's talk about tribal affairs. Knowing personalities and knowing the way in which the tribes in Iraq interact with each other politically and with the former government politically would have helped you to understand exactly what a tribal leader means, to the tribe and to the government. You know the prior relationships, you know what you are talking about.

Also know the difference between Sunnis and Shias. But then of course later that would have helped to understand how Shias relate to Iran, and the politics that Iran is playing in Iraq to this day.

Q: OK, now these things you are referring to, you did not get training at all before going to Iraq, concerning those?

ORZOL: No.

Q: And by the way, I don't think you used the word Kurd a single time. Do you not have contact with Kurds in that ethnic mix?

ORZOL: I didn't, not much. Well, did we have Kurds that came in? Yes; working on Kurdish issues. I didn't go up to Kurdistan at all, I just didn't happen to focus on any of that. I did a lot of south stuff. That just happened to be what I did.

Q: When you talk about the desirability of training or orientation on these kinds of cultural issues like tribal organization and religious and ethnic differences, do you have any observations about a general orientation to cross-cultural contact? Not the specific differences, but how you deal with people when you don't speak their language, when you're a complete stranger.

ORZOL: Well, what's important to note is that, even if you have a translator, and he's the best, or she's the best translator in the world, they could be saying one thing on text or in life, but really be asking for something different. I'm not saying that I'm an expert in that, but that's probably just something you pick up culturally over there. It could be a conversation about flowers that you're talking about. I'm not sure. I really can't think of an example of a subtlety in a conversation that had to be omitted or whatever. But they could be saying, a tribal leader could be saying something just to test you.

Q: That's an interesting issue that came up in my earlier interviews. You have to not only establish some rapport with people you talk to, including the people you are supervising, your own Iraqi translators for example. You also have to have some kind of standard for judging how reliable what they say to you is, or how reliably you can act on what you hear.

ORZOL: You mean from the employees?

Q: Well employees and your clients coming in. And I wonder if there's any kind of training that would help people to do the best possible job.

ORZOL: How to decipher that?

Q: Yeah, when you get into a social and professional interaction, how to interpret what you're hearing.

ORZOL: That's interesting because at the outset, when I hired my first batch of people, I had no idea what they stood for with anything. Rather than to ask them directly, you work together on one project and then you start another project and you work with them there. And then you already have a comparative study of what they're all about, how they perform in situations. You put one of them in charge and you see how well they work.

Then you just deal with day-to-day issues and problems, which always come up that define you. Right? That's how you learn to understand who's who. And I fired people because I couldn't gain an understanding. I didn't need them anymore, basically. And people that I did understand, that understood me, I kept. And I developed them. So we developed close relationships and a trusting relationship. And that grew to as many people as I needed. And then, it became a cult of personality.

Basically, you could have hired a new person and through the collective conscious of the group they understand the rules and expectations because they see everybody else abiding by a similar thing. So that was interesting, that was down the road though. In terms of

dealing with the people, your client, that you don't have the benefit of working with, you develop your institution, your mini institution with rules.

Like if someone comes in and demands help for something, you don't just run up to them and see what he wants. You say, well you have got to wait in line there, there's the person, you've got to register here and then they'll talk to you, that's the caseworker. So they have to sort of succumb to your process. And that's how you break down what they want.

Because by the time they get from point A to point C, they'll already have been kind of whittled down to what they want and employees already knew better. So there's two ways to look at cultural differences and how to bridge the gap between what the mission is, what you're doing, the product you're offering, and then bringing that up with the client.

Q: Yes, because if you just go straight ahead according to a way that is kind of internalized for you, you may find that you don't get the response from people who are coming from a different background, who have different expectations, different standards, different values.

ORZOL: You know what, this is a conclusion that's very valid. That's why maybe a recommendation is always to develop a local workforce, because they will become an appendage of you. And they will be an appendage that can quickly relate to the local; the fresh local coming in through the system that you're introducing to them. So you don't have to do the work, you just develop a system and the most able bodied person will be on that end, but they will be your person.

Q: What advice would you pass on for future operations? How could this have been done better?

ORZOL: You know what, thinking about all this, none of this would have been possible without the locals, the local staff. That almost seems like a formula. It's go in with a mindset that you're going to have a mission to do, any kind of mission, and as quickly as possible develop the local staff in any capacity, find out what they're good at and then steer them towards your aims and goals.

You couldn't do that with, let's say, Doctors Without Borders. I'm not tearing apart their organization. But say that they were in a position to go to a country and not only just be physicians. I understand that there are high end physicians going into a country that probably has no capable physician base or whatever, or they're going into a population with no physicians.

But if they were to develop a network of triage and care givers and stuff, which they probably do anyway, you would think that they could expand care giving, instead of just being that one physician doing, I've given that example ...

Q: Because they are not institution building, they're not nation building. And if our function in Iraq is to leave the place stable and be on the road to responsible development and becoming a responsible member of the community of nations ...

ORZOL: You would think, "Why not start now?"

Q: Why not start now and that gets right into your developing the local workforce. It's going to be in their hands. The local workforce at large...it's their country.

ORZOL: Right, they're going to execute the mission the best.

Q: So part of your mission, a prominent part of it, from the beginning, has to be to build up local abilities to run their own society, run their own economy, run their own government.

ORZOL: Who better to do it for them? Again, a disclaimer: I'm not tearing apart Doctors Without Borders, and maybe I don't even know exactly what they do, but ...

Q: I think the analogy, anyway, makes a lot of sense. Well, I'm thinking that we are drawing pretty much to a close, we've gone through the questions on governance. And we just barely touched on security because that is not central to your concern and apparently it didn't bear on your operation on a day-to-day basis very significantly.

ORZOL: I didn't have to worry about it too much. We did have people come in with a lot of leads, intelligence leads. Of course our mission is not to try to exploit them. We also have a channel which we can turn people on to. And if they had something to say, we could put them in contact with the right people.

Q: Understood. And that's actually consistent with a great deal of what you do; you would hear what people came in with and then put them in touch with the right people. And also, you were a referral service as much as you were direct service providers.

ORZOL: Right, that's what we did.

Q: How was the experience for you, broadly speaking; you're a young man at the outset of your work career and has this been a life changing experience for you?

ORZOL: Yes, it has been the experience I've been waiting for. I've always wanted, ever since I went into the Air Force originally to join intelligence to be able to interact with people. But then I realized when I was cooped up in a room listening to things, I wasn't exactly doing that. I was very far away from interacting culturally. Although I could do it by the proxy of the language I was listening to, it wasn't very fun.

I got out of that and I joined up with civil affairs a few years later. And it was time, right before the Iraq war, and there I went. And then I went with a conviction to do the best I

could. And I think everybody that I worked with felt the same way too. We had a great group of people; we really did our best.

Q: It's very striking in contrast to what we see in the media that when you get down to talking about what was happening on the ground, on the civilian side, people like you come away with a great sense of satisfaction that you were able to accomplish something positive.

ORZOL: Right, but don't let me overshadow the tremendous need to actually know more about tribal affairs. In fact, one of the guys that I could refer you to tries to champion that cause. And there's still a lot of uphill work to go. I think if we knew more, and I say this about myself, I probably could have done, maybe change the direction of my work, maybe affected a different group of people.

Maybe I wouldn't have blindsided anybody. With that being said, I still made relationships with people in certain tribes and I understood the dynamic. I understood that even if I was dealing with this one person, I could be dealing with another person and still be dealing with that one person because it's a tribe. That was something I still kind of don't understand too well.

Q: And that tribal identification ...

ORZOL: It's important, like we don't do this ...

Q: It's important, even in Baghdad ...

ORZOL: Oh [emphatically] yes.

Q: Even in cosmopolitan Baghdad with five million people.

ORZOL: It's like a race qualifier. Like in America we have these debates about race. If it's a political issue that has to do with race, education or any subset of education has to do with race. If you're talking to a person of a certain race about that issue, you almost could see the identity based on the way you identify.

In Iraq, everybody is the same color. Even if they are different colors, they could be part of the same tribe. So you don't have those types of delineations and to know about them is to be like in our world and not be colorblind.

Q: I understand you but I'm a little surprised because I think that we conventionally compare our race and ethnic distinctions with Sunni, Shia and Kurd and then smaller groups in Iraq. But you're suggesting ...

ORZOL: Well there's more.

Q: That there's much more and the tribal affiliations should not be underestimated that they are of enormous importance.

ORZOL: Right, yes.

Q: Well that's an interesting observation to take away. And with that, I think we will close the Iraq Experience Interview of Jack Orzol. Thanks very much.

ORZOL: Thank you very much.