

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

**DAVID GOMPERT  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*Interviewed by: Donald Tice*  
*Initial interview date: August 25, 2004*  
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David Gompert, 58, has worked in multiple societal sectors. He spent 10 years in the private sector, 10 years in the research field, and 15 years in the government where he worked for the State Department and the National Security Council.

At the end of 2003 Mr. Gompert was asked by Jerry Bremer, the senior US civilian official in Iraq, to succeed the departing senior adviser for national defense and security (Walter Slocombe). Mr. Gompert was responsible for formulating policy, creating institutions, and advising the Iraqi political leadership on the full range of national security matters, both near and long term, with particular (but not exclusive) emphasis on defense.

When Mr. Gompert arrived in Iraq, the security situation was unfavorable for the development of a state. Early appearances suggested that the security situation was improving as the old regime's leadership were captured and organizations deteriorated.

This did not last, however, as security problems worsened at the six month mark. The reconstruction effort therefore continually suffered from an unacceptable level of violence.

Violence was especially high in the Sunni areas. Here the principal burden of providing security fell on the shoulders of U.S. military forces, as it did throughout most of the country. While there were British, Polish, Spanish and Italian forces in the Shia areas, the U.S. forces still bore the overwhelming security burden as of the end of 2003. The quality of Iraqi police and Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) remained stagnant. By April, the simultaneous crises in Fallujah and the Shia heartland, both the ICDC, and the Iraqi police were essentially of no value.

With regard to the future, Mr. Gompert saw a possibility that by the end of 2004 there might be some improvement in security conditions. However, he indicated concern that a continued deterioration could bring about an increase in violence, further instability, and economic deterioration. A key element in curtailing such problems concerns the speed with which an effective Iraq Security Force can be recruited and trained. His feelings regarding this issue support his opinion that lowering the American profile would be a positive means of improving security in Iraq.

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*Q: Mr. Gompert, give me a brief sketch of your professional background and indicate how and when you became involved in Iraq.*

GOMPERT: My background consists of roughly a decade in business, approximately 15 years of government service – National Security Council, State Department – and roughly 10 years in the research field. I got involved in Iraq unexpectedly at the end of 2003 when a former colleague of mine, Jerry Bremer, asked me to succeed Walter Slocombe who had been the senior adviser for national defense and security.

*Q: So, you had any intimate, close association with Iraq before this came up?*

GOMPERT: Not with Iraq.

*Q: OK. What is the role that you played when you went over there? You were the number two, is that right?*

GOMPERT: No, I was responsible for formulating policy and creating institutions and advising the Iraqis and the Iraqi political leadership on a full range of national security matters, both near term and long term, with particular emphasis on defense, but not exclusive emphasis on defense.

*Q: Did you have any problem being able to get to the people that you needed to talk to in the Iraq side?*

GOMPERT: On occasion, I had security problems. Otherwise, I had all the access I needed.

*Q: Did you find that they were receptive in talking to you during the period?*

GOMPERT: They were most receptive in talking to me. How receptive they were after we got done talking is a different question. But from the most friendly to the most ambivalent about our presence and my role, they were uniformly approachable, highly approachable.

*Q: We're talking about at the higher echelons of the current Iraqi government, right?*

GOMPERT: The higher echelons, yes, but not the current Iraqi government. This was the Iraqi Governing Council, and in particular the Security Committee of the Governing Council, which was a 13-person committee. It was chaired by the current Prime Minister, not prime minister then. On this committee sat almost all of the leading members of the Governing Council that had anything to do with security.

*Q: Was there a special security area in the Iraqi council that you talked with on this?*

GOMPERT: It was the Security Committee. It had responsibility for all security issues, near as well as long-term, operational as well as institution building, domestic as well as external. So it had great breadth and insofar as the Governing Council had any responsibilities, which of course were limited during the occupation, the Security Committee was a pretty powerful institution.

*Q: How severe were the security problems when you arrived there?*

GOMPERT: They were less severe than they were the day I left. I would say that when I arrived, the security situation was certainly unfavorable for the development of a country, and certainly had an unacceptable level of violence. However, at that time in December of 2003, there was at least an appearance that things were or might be getting better. Because of the passage of time, because of the elimination of many of the leaders of the old regime and the old security establishment, we thought that the international terrorism problem had really not manifested itself in any major way, that there were no serious security threats from the Shia, and that the remnants of the old regime security organizations, predominantly Sunni, that they were slowly dying off or losing interest.

That was, at least, my assessment of the security situation in December of 2003, and I must say I did not feel particularly insecure myself, or hampered in trying to do my job.

*Q: Were the Iraqi police of much use at that time?*

GOMPERT: No, what appeared to be improving security conditions as of the end of 2003 was not a consequence of the quality of the Iraqi police. In fact, the Iraqi police at that stage were very mixed, to be charitable about it. The reason for that is the coalition's choice to basically keep the old Iraqi police force in being. This force consisted of 70,000 to 80,000 policemen who were poorly led, poorly trained, poorly motivated and, to some degree, corrupt.

So, it was not an effective police force at all. It was not held in high regard by the Iraqi citizens, not because the police had terrorized them, like some of the other security organizations, but because the police were simply not regarded as an effective institution in the old regime. And it was that police force that we had as of the end of 2003.

*Q: Was the U.S. military directly involved critically in the trying to lower security problems?*

GOMPERT: The security problems, generally, yes. The U.S. military had a heavy burden – not so much in the Kurdish areas because things were secure there and there was no need to concentrate forces there, but certainly in the Sunni areas. In the Shia areas, you had British and Polish and Spanish and Italian forces. However, the U.S. forces had to bear the overwhelming burden and risk to providing security as of the end of 2003, where security was poorest.

*Q: Did we provide a lot of technical assistance to providing things for the Iraqis to try to bring up their security capabilities?*

GOMPERT: Yes, we did, but I must say, with the benefit of hindsight, that as of the time I arrived there – and I think it's only honest to say through much of my time there, we didn't settle on a clear set of priorities, or the right set of priorities, and nor did we apply sufficient resources to the highest priorities. Let me give you a simplified model. There were the police and there was the military. In both cases, we were pulled between the goals of numbers and quality. There was an argument, a respectable argument, for getting as many policemen and as many troops, if you want to call them that, into the field and engaged in providing security and working with our military forces as soon as possible. There was an argument for numbers, in other words.

I didn't entirely buy it, but the argument was you've got to convince the Iraqi people that the coalition is providing security and that security is being provided – that the Coalition Provisional Authority, the governing authority of the country, was in fact providing security, and not only the security of foreign troops, but the presence and observable presence of large numbers of police and Iraqi troops. That point of view put a lot of emphasis on providing quick, in-the-field, on-the-job training to this 80,000 man strong, essentially old, police force, on the one hand – and also the creation of what was called the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps. It's now the National Guard, but it was the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps.

Those who felt that getting numbers of Iraqis out there to reassure the people, and also to take some burden off of us, were strong advocates of abbreviated training for the police and putting the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps out there, attached to our forces, with virtually no training.

The other point of view, which I held, was that the nature of the threats – and this became more apparent to me over time – that the nature of the threats required much more sophisticated Iraqi forces. They had to be modern, well led, well trained, with specific and specialized skills. They had to be good at counter-insurgency. They had to be good at counter-terrorism. They had to be good at dealing with complex problems of civil unrest. In other words, if not elite forces, they had to be good ones. As we moved into the New Year, this became my increasing point of view. It became clearer to me that these threats were not going to go away, and they might even be getting more severe.

The situation did, in fact, get more severe. To go back to the original question, I and

others were pulled by the polar objectives of Iraqi security force numbers and Iraqi security force quality. By April, when we had the crises, the simultaneous crises, in Fallujah and in the Shia heartland, the ICDC (Iraqi Civil Defense Corps), which by that time was about 35,000 strong, and the police, 80,000 strong, were of little value – essentially no value.

By this I mean that given the kinds of risks that were faced not just by neighborhood crime, but a major uprising in the south and really hardened killers concentrated in Fallujah and some of the other Sunni cities, the police and the ICDC were not up to it. In fact, many of them fled or went to the other side, in the case of some the police. Whereas the people that both on the police side and the regular army that we were training – more serious training, I won't say it was adequate training, but it was weeks, not days of training – they were way too few in number, and too green. They weren't of much value either. Thus, one year after the end of the so-called combat phase, we found ourselves with Iraqi security forces that were of little value in dealing with a serious flare-up in the security situation.

*Q: – Speaking of the security flare-up, how effective and how organized were the police forces?*

GOMPERT: It was just extremely uneven. I would say that the police were organized on paper. There were police chiefs and people reporting to them, and the relationship between the police chief and the provincial governor or the mayor or our forces was all pretty well laid out on paper. But the quality, responsiveness and reliability of the police were so low to the extent that they were ineffective on the military side.

This large Iraqi Civil Defense Corps really couldn't function well except as under the direct control of our Army and our Marines because all they were kind auxiliaries. They were good for perimeter defense, and they were good at doing things that otherwise would have to be done by U.S. Marines and U.S. soldiers. Albeit, we felt we'd rather have our people doing the hard stuff.

*Q: Well, what about the other side, Sadr's boys. They seemed to be very effective, or is it just that they're a bunch of wild men who are difficult to get under control?*

GOMPERT: I would say of the threats that Iraq faces, the Sadr threat is not the gravest. I would say that the continuing stubborn resistance coming from the insurgents and the remnants of the old regime seem to have gotten a second wind. This is the most difficult problem to defeat.

*Q: Where are they getting their ammunition, their supplies and their backup?*

GOMPERT: Well, they of course had enormous stockpiles of not only weapons, but money from the old regime. Now, they are getting some support from professional foreign fighters and professional terrorists that are coming into the country. In terms of the support they're getting from abroad, I think it is more in the form of more specialized

skills, better planning and organizing know-how, and more effective weapons, like suicide bombs. These are ideas and know-how from the outside that they didn't have before.

*Q: When did these outsiders start coming in? At what point did they say, "Hey, here's something we can stir up?"*

GOMPERT: Well, as I said, I saw the security situation deteriorate from December of 2003 until June of 2004, during the period I was there. I saw it deteriorate in along all three of these fronts. That is, Moqtad al-Sadr's rabble got better, tougher, stronger, on the one hand. The Sunni insurgency, made up mainly of hardened killers from the old regime, reorganized and became stronger. Meanwhile, the foreign terrorists gained strength during that period, mainly because they had more time.

If you give the professional international terrorists -- the al Qaedas and al Qaeda affiliates, and Zarqawi, and Ansar al Islam and associated groups --time, then they will exploit that because they're good at planning. They're good at moving people. They're good at organizing and networking. They are good at recruiting and training. During the first six months, up until December, 2003, they didn't show themselves to be a really severe threat, but in the course of the six months that followed, up until today, it's clear that they see this not just as a fleeting opportunity, but a major strategic opportunity.

They believe that it's important to defeat the political process in Iraq, and they have had the time to organize and to do some real damage, which I expect will continue. In the case of international terrorists, this takes the form of not so much attacks on coalition forces as it does real terrorist weapons like assassinations, kidnappings and suicide bombings.

*Q: -- Looking down the road, is this going to be a long, drawn-out affair of some years, or is it something that can be taken down in the next six months, a year?*

GOMPERT: I think that in the best possible scenario, six months from now we might see some improvement in conditions and some prospect for continuing maybe even irreversible improvement. That's the best. The worst is that it will continue to be violent and politically unstable and economically ragged for years to come. That depends on the state of quality of the Iraqi security forces. It depends upon the legitimacy of the Iraqi government and the political process, the willingness of the people to provide support to the government and to the security forces.

In fact, I would say that popular support, not just political support for the government and the process, but operational support for everyday support for Iraqi security forces, and for coalition security forces, is the most important and uncertain variable in the whole mix. To the extent that that support is forthcoming, I'm optimistic. To the extent that it's not, to the extent that we see apathy and antipathy in large segments of the population, particularly Sunni and Shia, then I'm not optimistic.

*Q: Will there be a time when the United States is going to say, 'Well, we've done everything we can here.' Do you think a time like that is coming in the near future? Out a ways?*

GOMPERT: I think that lowering the American profile would actually be a positive development for improving security in Iraq because to the extent that we continue to be seen as an occupying force, in evidence every day, that contributes to the animosity of the insurgents and the militants. It also makes it easier for them to appeal to the public to support the resistance, or at least not side with the powers that be against the resistance. As long as you have an occupation, you have resistance.

Therefore, I think it's not so much a matter of us saying, "We're doing all we can, we're playing a major and positive role. And the day will come when we're going to reduce that, be allowed to reduce it." I think reducing it is actually part of the strategy of shifting responsibility to the Iraqis and removing at least the appearance of occupation as a source of insecurity.

*Q: Would this possibly mean pulling out major military forces, or at least moving them back where they are not that exposed and apparent to the Iraqis?*

GOMPERT: Certainly the latter. Certainly the latter. I don't think we can make an assessment on the former until after the election of the Iraqi National Assembly. I think that becomes a critical point six months from now by which we will know whether the efforts to improve the quality of Iraqi security forces have paid off, whether the economy is improving, but also whether the political process, and particularly Iraqi governance, is gaining the kind of legitimacy that will gather public support. If you meet those conditions, then I think you've got a situation in which not just the pull back, but the beginning of a pull out of American forces would be not only feasible, but advisable. Basically, everything moves in a direction of continuing the process of a shift of responsibilities, a shift of burden, a shift of authority, to the Iraqis.

But, if those conditions that I mentioned, the political, economic and Iraqi security force quality, are not in place in six months, then you've got a security situation which is no better than what we have today. What we have today is such that if you're talking about any serious fighting against determined insurgents, militants and terrorists, the coalition forces are the only ones who can do it.

*Q: If the situation does not improve after some time, do you think the coalition forces will begin to say, "Hey, we've done so long on this, and it's not going anywhere, we're going to start pulling out,"?*

GOMPERT: No, I think that is behind us. The Spanish, two other Latin American countries and the Philippines pulled out. I think that happened and that's done with, and the others have basically said we'll stick it out. You never know what's going to happen with Italy, because there is domestic politics, because it's Italy. Concerning the British and the Australians, I think they are there for the duration.

And so I don't see the coalition, such as it is, unraveling. But don't forget, the coalition, the non-American parts of the coalition, represent 10 percent of the force, maybe 15 percent of the force. Actually, I should correct that. Of the total coalition, because you should include Iraqi forces in the total coalition – of that total coalition, that total set of friendly forces that are providing security in Iraq, the non-American, non-Iraqi component is probably 5 percent or less. So while it may have political consequences, I don't see it having any operational consequences if the rest of the coalition vanished.

Now, that doesn't mean we never needed a coalition. I believe that had we had a broader and larger coalition, it would have improved things on every front. But here's where are, and if we lost other countries in the coalition, it wouldn't reduce significantly the forces available to provide security in the country.

*Q: I mentioned Sadr before. You said that he's not one of the biggest problems.*

GOMPERT: Right at the moment, he's a very big problem. He's a very big problem because the dynamics of Shia politics and of Shia involvement in the political process, and on what terms, all of that is very much at stake. If he is mishandled, either with too much brutality, attacks on the shrine and so on, then you poison Shia attitudes about the current governing authorities and about the political process. If he is rewarded for shooting his way in, shooting his way into the system, if you will, or permitted to shoot his way into the system, into the political process, that too can do harm to the moderate, peaceful inclusion of the Shia into the political process.

So, finding a way through this current crisis with Moqtad al-Sadr is extremely important in order to set the terms, if you will, for the peaceful and responsible participation of 60 percent of the population of the country in the political process. I think we will get through that.

What is much harder to get through, what's much harder to see the light at the end of the tunnel, is the presence of the international terrorists who are very patient, very determined, and even more so the thousands of fighters and killers that had been part of the old regime because they really are dead-enders. They have nowhere to go. They don't have an opportunity to enter the political process, nor should they.

I think, therefore, that the foreign terrorist and the so-called Saddamist fighters represent long-term threats that – and, of course, they don't want to participate in the political process. They want to kill the political process. They want to derail it. They do not want a democratic Iraq. Arguably, even the most militant Shia welcome a democratic Iraq because the Shia will have the majority. Certainly, though, the international terrorists and the Saddamists would view the development of a democratic and pluralistic Iraq as a major defeat. Therefore, they will continue to fight even in the positive scenario that I outlined for you over the next six months.

Even in that scenario, those two elements will have every reason to continue fighting and



little reason to stop. Now, maybe the terrorists will get tired of Iraq. Maybe they will think, "Well, we're not going to win in Iraq," and they'll go elsewhere, but the Saddamists certainly will carry on, I think, until they're more or less eliminated.

*Q: Is there any sort of guesstimate of how many people there are of Saddamist loyalty?*

GOMPERT: While I was there, I guess my number was 5,000 to 10,000. There have been suggestions that it could be as many as 20,000. But if you're talking about, again, the professional hardened killers that belonged to the old regime's most vicious security organizations, Special Republican Guard, Mukhabarat and the like, if there are 1,000 of them in each of the major cities, major Sunni cities, and a couple thousand of them in Baghdad itself, then you get up around 10,000. And I think that's probably the high end. Unless they're scattered all over, in all the villages and everything, I can't see where many more than 10,000 would actually be.

We know, for example, that there have been maybe 1,500 to 2,000 of them in Fallujah, which is a real concentration. Then, there are probably hundreds, if not thousands, in Ramadi, Samarra, Baquba, Mosul...who knows? So, roughly 10,000 would be my guess.

*Q: Are the clerics balanced toward the outlaw side, in general?*

GOMPERT: They are unhelpful if not for inciting violence indirectly, but some of them have incited violence directly. Then, they concentrate their wrath and their sermons against the occupiers which inflame attitudes about occupation and question the illegitimacy of not only the Coalition Provisional Authority but all the coalition forces, which in the Sunni areas are all American forces. That kind of venom can be used either to dampen whatever opposition there may be to the killers or even give the killers some assistance in the Sunni areas.

*Q: What about the Kurds? They seem to be, in a sense, off to one side. Are they getting integrated into the new, larger government?*

GOMPERT: Yes, they are. They made the decision that they wanted to participate, and they wanted to have very important positions. They concluded there was really no way out of Iraq, and that therefore they should negotiate the best deal they could. After they negotiated a pretty good deal of a federalist Iraq with a great deal of autonomy for the three governorates of the Kurdish Regional Government, and once they reconciled themselves to that as their future, then they played their hand very well in gaining important positions – deputy prime minister, foreign minister, chief of staff at the army, or I should say the senior military adviser. A number of key positions are Kurds.

This is a good thing because the Kurds have plenty of talent, plenty of competence, and the experience of the Kurds over the last decade has been one of democratic, pluralistic governance. So, they bring a lot, and they want to be in a position of influence.

They are off to one side in the sense that conditions in Kurdistan are very different than

conditions in the rest of the country. It's secure, it's open, it's democratic, and it's prosperous, whereas the rest of the country, by and large, is not. The big issues with the Kurds I think for now have been settled. They will bring their militias under – either retire them or in the case of about 50 percent of them, they'll bring them under government control. So that problem has, for now at least, been addressed.

They will support a federal Iraq, which is favorable to them, and they will participate and help control the borders. They will help strengthen the army. Where you have trouble with the Kurds is along the fault line between the Kurdish and the Arab ethnic groups in places like Kirkuk and Mosul. These areas are mixed Arab-Kurdish where you get continued encroachments on the part of Kurdish peoples, no doubt with the encouragement of Kurdish officials. Of course, it so happens that those are areas that have a lot of oil in the ground.

I think the Kurds are thus trying to expand, de facto, their control along that line.

*Q: Are the Iranians playing mischievous games, or are they staying back and out of it?*

GOMPERT: No, I think mischief is exactly the way to describe it. I think they have not done anything, nor will they do anything, that would constitute a direct, open threat to the borders, across the borders, to Iraqi forces, to coalition forces, to the interim government. In other words, they won't pose an unambiguous external threat to the country, but they are creating all kinds of mischief underneath the surface by extending their influence through intelligence agents, but also through religious or quasi-religious involvement among the Shia Islamist communities and parties.

Their attempts to influence or control parts of the two Shia Islamist parties in Iraq -- Dawa Party and SCIRI (Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq) -- are quite significant. Of course, they can call upon the importance of the Iranian ayatollahs, if you accept that view of Shi'ite Islam that says the clerics are superior to the state. If you believe ultimately in a theocracy instead of a democracy, then that belief draws you toward an acceptance of the leadership of Iranian-based ayatollahs because that's the way the system works.

And the Iranians have played on that quite effectively. Nevertheless, there's a lot going against them. First of all, the non-Shi'ites in Iraq are strongly opposed to Iranian influence. Then, within the Shia, you've got the seculars, who are at least as alarmed about an Iranian involvement as the non-Shia are. Further, within the Shia Islamist community, there is certainly a majority who feel that Iranian influence and obedience to Iranian-based clerics is the wrong way to go.

In review, then, the opportunity the Iranians have to really exploit this opening for major strategic gains, either to bring about a failure of democracy in Iraq, to hijack democracy in Iraq, or to turn Iraq against the United States, is indeed limited. Unfortunately, we have very little influence with Iran.

*Q: What kind of role will John Negroponte be playing now?*

GOMPERT: A very quiet one.

*Q: Well, certainly he's made no noise since he took up his post.*

GOMPERT: Yes, that's a good sign. I think a sort of quiet, behind-the-scenes advice to the Iraqi leadership that stops well short of dictating to them. I mean, it would not be wise to be dictating to them behind the scenes, even if you didn't have any public evidence of that. You've got to give the Iraqis the opportunity to make mistakes, so a soft touch and a private touch, I think, are extremely important -- but that advice is important also. Secondly, to give general policy oversight to the continuing effort to improve Iraqi security forces is a very important role that he plays. Even though it's the U.S. military that provides the bulk of that assistance, the chief of mission is well placed and certainly has heavy responsibilities to push that assistance in the right directions that serve Iraqi interests, and ultimately, our interests. Third, he is of course responsible for the conduct of U.S. forces in the country. While that U.S. chain of command goes up through CENTCOM (Central Command) to the Secretary of Defense, obviously the Chief-of-Mission has an important voice in decisions made about the use of American forces in that country. I would say those are the three most critical roles that Negroponte plays.

*Q: Does he take up any of the things that Jerry Bremer was doing?*

GOMPERT: Well, he doesn't run the country. I mean, we ran the country. We wrote laws and issued laws. There was a huge change between the Coalition Provisional Authority and the U.S. embassy -- a huge change. The advisory role continues with less leverage because whereas we could advise knowing that at the end of the day we could also dictate, he can advise, and that's it. The advisory role is every bit as important, but in a way it's harder because now the Iraqis may accept or not accept the advice.

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GOMPERT: The continuing advisory role, to repeat, is important in regard to Iraqi institution building, a strategy, Iraqi strategy, vis-à-vis the internal threats to the country, certainly an advisory role with regard to external policy. It's up to the Iraqis to make that policy, but we have advice, and I have every reason to believe the Iraqis welcome the advice if they don't always agree to it. Also, an advisory role with regard to the forces themselves is a technical advisory role in the continuing build-up, training and equipping of the Iraqi security forces. All of those advisory functions are very important, though the U.S. ambassador can only provide U.S. advice whereas we provided advice with teeth.

*Q: And that continues?*

GOMPERT: My team -- well, it continues, but in a very different way. My team, which was an integrated team, was about 50 percent American and 50 percent non-American in the national security and defense directorate that I ran. Now, the embassy has only

Americans. The advisory coordination that takes place now occurs on the recipient's premises. In other words, it's in the Ministry of Defense or in the Ministry of Interior or whatever ministry where it comes together, where the multinational character of the ongoing advice comes together because there's a mechanism for managing or coordinating multilateral assistance. The most important mechanism, though, is in the ministries themselves. Teams have formed with representatives from the different companies and from the different missions who attempt to perform as a team within that ministry. It's a different mechanism.

*Q: In advisory roles, that's as far as it goes?*

GOMPERT: Advisory roles, and that's as far as it goes, but where the multilateral character is evident in the ministry itself as opposed to in the U.S. mission; the U.S. mission only has responsibility for and control over only American advisers. While I suggested earlier that the numerical contribution of the non-American participants in the coalition is very small, the qualitative importance of non-Americans in the advisory role is huge. For starters, the Australians, Italians and British played an extremely important role in all of the national security advisory work that we did, from interior to intelligence to defense.

*Q: Do you have any sort of parting thoughts that you want to put on record regarding what has happened?*

GOMPERT: Well, you didn't ask me about reconstruction. I think the failure to have produced more noticeable improvement in the quality of service, the quality of Iraqi lives and the availability of jobs during the first year had a pretty big effect on security. The lack of jobs, the poor quality of services and the poor state of Iraqi infrastructure was felt most severely in precisely the areas of greatest instability, namely the Sunni heartland and the Shia heartland.

If you're talking about the armed fighters, I can't say that the militants, the Shia militants and the Sunni insurgents were motivated by unemployment and poor services; I don't think that's the case. However, attitudes in the general public among dispossessed Shia and among angry Sunnis were certainly aggravated by high unemployment and generally poor conditions in the country especially in terms of security and quality of life.

Now, I think the Coalition Provisional Authority did a heroic job in trying to improve the infrastructure, the functioning and the quality of Iraqi life. However, the improvement was slow, it was ponderous and it certainly didn't meet Iraqi expectations. Therefore, we were blamed.

Now, why didn't CPA meet those expectations? First of all, I think the Iraqis had unrealistic expectations about how we were going to come in; the U.S. was going to come in and make their lives better overnight. But the other thing is that we as a country were unprepared for the sorry state of Iraq. As you know, we were prepared for a humanitarian crisis, but we were unprepared for a country, an economy, a physical plant,

a state, that was in some respects on its last legs, that had been in a state of decay for decades, aggravated no doubt by the sanctions – to a very minor extent by the war itself, to some extent by the looting. What we found, because of conditions that existed before the war, was a failing state.

So, this wasn't about reconstruction. Reconstruction is the wrong way to think about it. This was about attempting to build on the top of rubble, not rubble from our air attacks, but rubble from decades of misrule and neglect and sanctions. Unless we had been prepared to mount, from day one at the end of the war, a massive assault on the deteriorated physical infrastructure, human capital, state enterprises and the whole system, there was no way in that first year we were going to be able to produce enough improvement in the quality of life and the security of lives of Iraqis to win their support for a foreign occupier trying to provide security against those threats that I mentioned. In the absence of that public support, there was no way to defeat those threats. You couldn't defeat them through military means, and that became clearer to me with the passage of time.

That is my net assessment of how politics, how intelligence failures, how slow infrastructure development and how poor economic conditions all contributed to insecurity, which in turn contributed to the difficult environment for creating a viable country.

[END INTERVIEW]