

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

**JAY BACHAR**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*Interviewed by: Larry Lesser*  
*Initial interview date: July 19, 2004*  
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Approximately 40 years of age, Major Jay Bachar (pronounced Bock-er) was a contractor with Northrop-Grumman. He was called up with his Army Reserve unit to serve in Iraq. He served as a civil affairs officer in Baghdad from April 20, 2003 to March 1, 2004. He also logged some additional training time in Kuwait.

Maj. Bachar worked in an Iraqi Assistance Center in downtown Baghdad (the Green Zone). There were 24 coalition officers at the center, and 57 Iraqi interpreters. They processed claims and inquiries from up to 400 Iraqis per day, referring many clients to other CPA entities for resolution of their issues. Their tasks included such activities as fielding requests for utilities service/repair, clearing trash from the streets, accepting and investigating prisoner release petitions, settling claims for damages incurred by coalition forces, and securing medical treatment (for Iraqis) abroad when treatment was not domestically available.

The Iraqi Assistance Centers have since been successfully turned over to Iraqis and renamed "General Information Centers". As part of this conversion process, Maj. Bachar noted the difficulties faced in transforming the centers into "indigenous" civil society organizations. He notes that the lack of a well-rooted civil society tradition, due largely to the previous regime, makes the establishment of Non-profit/Non-Governmental Organizations difficult.

As part of his work, Maj. Bachar was familiarized with many reconstruction issues. Some were infrastructure-related. For example, electricity and water services were originally in bad shape due to neglect and looting, and continue to be in poor shape due to the continued effects of looting and sabotage.

Maj. Bachar noted greater success in other areas of reconstruction. U.S. supplemental appropriation funds had considerable impact quickly in the development of infrastructure. Civil affairs was also able to use military CERP funds (for quick-start projects) to carry out initiatives.

While large American corporations were the "prime" contractors hired, much of the work (including management) was directly and sub-contracted to Iraqi firms. The involvement of Iraqi businesses was so great that a database was developed to keep track of indigenous Baghdad materials suppliers and construction firms.

Indeed, Maj. Bachar noted that the Iraqi economy has developed to be entrepreneur-friendly, with little taxation except on imports. Small businesses are proliferating. Corruption remains a problem, but is partly explained by cultural differences. Women play a large part in the Baghdad job market as professionals, but few own or operate businesses.

When looking at public perceptions of reconstruction, Maj. Bachar believes that anti-coalition militants waged an effective information war against coalition reconstruction activities. For example, they portrayed US corporations as detrimental to the Iraqi economy and job market and blamed the US for the failure of services caused by looting and sabotage. He feels that negative perceptions were exacerbated by the western media. He thinks that the CPA should have done much better in getting the word out on reconstruction successes and the true causes of failures.

Another issue raised was economic reconstruction. ORHA (Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance) came in with a disaster response plan, but no humanitarian disaster materialized. ORHA's successor, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), never developed a clear and focused economic development plan. This was a source of frustration for the civil affairs units.

Despite the economic reconstruction effort's shortcomings, there were some notable success stories. The currency issue is one such example. Occupation authorities were ultimately successful in retaining confidence in the dinar. Their efforts included managing the ration card system from the Saddam government, and injecting cash to stimulate economic activity.

A third, governance-related area discussed was the impact of de-Baathification. As part of its de-Baathification policy, the CPA decapitated the top four personnel tiers of every ministry. Mr. Bachar viewed this policy, as well as the disbanding the Iraqi army, as mistakes. He contends that the CPA's cuts went too deep by creating operational problems for the ministries. These problems put people into adversarial positions vis-à-vis the occupation authority.

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*Q: Today is Monday, July 19th. This is an interview with Major Jay Bachar.*

BACHAR: Bachar [pronounced Bocker].

*Q: Jay Bachar, 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. Well, Major Bachar, thanks very much for being available and for inviting me to interview you at your home and we will note that your wife is also present. Can I get basic information from you, your name, your area of specialty, age, education, employer, relevant professional background, Iraq assignment, Iraq assignment-specific training and your period of service in Iraq and future plans?*

BACHAR: Okay. My name is Jay Bachar. In my civilian job I am a contractor with Northrop Grumman and we have a contract with the State Department. I work in the political military bureau, in what's called the political military action team which is a 24/7 operation in the State Department that serves as State's counterpart to the Department of Defense's national military command center. I was originally a major in the reserves, however, when I was mobilized, I was mobilized as a staff sergeant for the record from various arcane military rules that I will not bore you to death with since we only have two hours. Suffice it to say, when they called me to active duty it was as a staff sergeant. My area of specialty in the army reserves is civil affairs. I am a school-trained civil affairs officer and also non-commissioned officer. My period of service in Iraq, my total mobilization period, was March 7th, 2003 until April 23rd, 2004. My time in theater; we arrived in Kuwait on April 2nd, my unit. We departed March 22, 2004. I actually entered Iraq on Easter Sunday, April 20th, 2003, arriving in Baghdad on April 22nd, 2003. My last day in Iraq was, we departed Baghdad March 1st, 2004 and reentered Kuwait March 3rd, 2004.

Future plans, I don't have any of my own plans to go back to Iraq. The army might have other plans of sending me back. I don't have any, but however, I don't have any plans of going back at this time.

*Q: Okay, well, that's a very well organized answer. Can you describe the nature and status of the economy in the area where you worked?*

BACHAR: I was in downtown Baghdad. My position there was the non-commissioned officer in charge of the Iraqi assistance center. This is sort of a national level civil military operations center. Again, because of being a major in the reserves, I was given by my director, who was Colonel Scott Brennan, a substantially larger amount of responsibility than normally an NCO would get because of my background as a major. We were located in the Green Zone at the Baghdad Convention Center. That was in fact, part of our mission was to observe, not only observe the economy and in this case primarily in Baghdad because you're right downtown in Baghdad, but also, to get reports to the outlying areas as to the nature of the economy. Having said all that, when we first arrived, the functioning economy, how can I say this? It existed. The biggest problem I think that the Iraqis had, they were unsure of the value of their Saddam dinars. The Iraqi currency is the dinar and every piece of currency has his face on it. I think the biggest anxiety they had was the value of their dinars.

As we were driving through Iraq from Kuwait, especially through the Shiite south, they would try and sell us their dinars thinking they were souvenirs and of course a lot of our guys bought them up because they had Saddam's face on them. They were making money.

*Q: So you say they were souvenirs in part.*

BACHAR: Yes. They were making American dollars selling Iraqi dinars as souvenirs. So, the very first thing that we had to do when we were in Baghdad was to ensure that their confidence level in their own currency was adequate that they would actually use their currency. The currency of the Iraqi dinar with Saddam's face or the new dinar we issued plugged freely against the American dollar the whole time I was there and that was probably the best thing that happened. When we initially arrived the pent up spending habits I guess of the GIs when they had finally gotten there, the army takes care of everything. You don't have to spend any money on food or any necessities, so you've got a lot of GIs with a lot of dollars. The Iraqi dinar was about 1,400 dinar to the dollar when we got there. It very rapidly went down to about 900 to the dollar and got stronger because we were out there just buying up everything in sight. Then I believe it fluctuated back up to about 1,900 to 2,100 to the dollar and now I believe today its right back around 1,400 to the dollar. That was our number one concern was that they had confidence in their dinar even though it had Saddam's face on it. The whole currency story in my view has been a success pretty much from the time we got there. There was never any loss of confidence in the dinar.

Services. Services were existent and functioning when we got there and the whole service sector in Baghdad in general was alive and well. Within two weeks or within one week after we were there, we were able to cater food from restaurants or order food to be catered in. We were able to do it. You could get a taxi. Of course in Baghdad, there were no rules, so anybody could serve as a taxi. If you wanted to pay the American dollars you could get a taxi ride. Food, taxi, I'm trying to think of other things.

*Q: Well, let me interrupt you for a second and could you clarify whether we're talking about Baghdad in general or the Green Zone?*

BACHAR: Just Baghdad in general. When I got there, there was no Green Zone. The Green Zone didn't really come into existence until about June, about two months later. It was just wide open. I mean I lived in the Green Zone, what came to be known as the Green Zone. For the first two months we were there, it was just downtown Baghdad. You still had the, I think, when we got to Baghdad the streets were empty. The streets of Baghdad were empty. We came in with the third infantry division. At most major intersections were a couple of tanks or some soldiers and we were initially greeted as liberators. I mean people were waving and coming up to us. There wasn't a need for a Green Zone. I think the shock of the assault [left] the Saddam forces demoralized and caused them to go into hiding and the bulk of the population greeted us and it was, I mean the security environment was very loose. I mean there was no reason not to really intermingle with people walking around.

*Q: So, when you say for example the taxi service, this kind of informal taxi service was available?*

BACHAR: Yes. Right.

*Q: You, yourself could go out and hail a taxi without escort in those early days?*

BACHAR: Yes. You could do it; it wasn't advisable to go by yourself. You'd go with two or three of your comrades. You wouldn't go on your own, but theoretically you could or you could change into civilian clothes and go on your own.

*Q: You started talking about services, what about electricity and water?*

BACHAR: Okay. All those things were in dire straits. Those types of, sort of the infrastructure in Baghdad was a total mess and that was primarily due to sabotage and looting. The sabotage when we initially got there seemed to be the order of the day, but as time went on it was looting. We would go in and fix the water pump in a neighborhood and the looters would come by and steal the pump and go sell it on the open market and the whole neighborhood would be without water again. So, there was (I know that I'm probably anticipating some questions), but there were tremendous quick fix projects. A number of them that we front-loaded when we got there as a civil affairs unit to repair infrastructure and things were quickly brought back on line and just as quickly brought off line by looters coming in and either stealing the water pumps or in the case of electricity, stealing cables because the cables had copper. They'd strip the cables for their copper content. The infrastructure was a complete mess for that reason for a long period of time. As a civil affairs unit, the security of infrastructure was not our business. Our business was just getting the infrastructure up and running.

*Q: Sure, but it's up and running one day, and then things had been stolen a day or two later, then you have to go back in again.*

BACHAR: Right. In fact, our own -- in what would become the Green Zone -- our own electrical and water infrastructure there actually went down for several days at a time because Iraqis would come in and steal water pumps, steal electric cables, steal generators, things like that. That was initially a real mess, a big problem, and those were the reasons, exacerbated by the fact that whenever it happened in a particular neighborhood, the rumor mill in that neighborhood would be that the Americans are punishing us. We had to come up with a public relations response and say, no, these are looters, it is not us, we are not doing this to you.

*Q: That wasn't just public relations, they were looters.*

BACHAR: Yes.

*Q: The things that were looted, did they reappear on the local market?*

BACHAR: Yes, they would reappear in bazaars, in open air bazaars, or they would make their way out of town to small villages where a water pump might come in handy or where they would want to buy a generator. Before the war, as far as electricity goes, Saddam had channeled most electrical power into Baghdad and Baghdad had electricity 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and was lit up like a Christmas tree and the rest of the country was virtually dark. One of the things that the Coalition Provisional Authority did, it was one of the decisions they made, was to even that out throughout the country. So, even to this day Baghdad does not have electricity 24 hours a day, but the rest, everyone has a modicum of electricity now as opposed to Baghdad having it all and the rest of the country having virtually none.

*Q: When you say everybody, do you mean throughout the entire country?*

BACHAR: The whole country. Yes. Everybody in the whole country now has at least eight hours a day of electricity. I think the average is about 16 hours whereas before it was probably less than two, but Baghdad had it 24 hours a day.

*Q: An ignorant question: was all of Iraq electrified?*

BACHAR: Yes. Yes.

*Q: Okay, so the remote villages have electricity.*

BACHAR: Yes, they do, or they did, they have power going into them.

*Q: As you said, you have somewhat anticipated questions, but let me ask them anyway because they may jog your memory for something else. What was the impact of the conflict, neglect, looting and failure to rapidly restore utilities and essential services? Do you think you've covered that?*

BACHAR: Yes, pretty much. The Iraqis were, just to reiterate, we quickly repaired facilities and they just as quickly looted. Until we got our hands around a security issue it was an ongoing problem for which the Iraqis blamed us and yes, we did not ensure that these things were secure, but also, they were looting their own facilities, so there's a little bit of dynamic going both ways.

*Q: Sure. Who was responsible for managing reconstruction?*

BACHAR: Originally, before it was CPA it was ORHA; ORHA was originally responsible for...

*Q: ORHA. O-R-H-A?*

BACHAR: O-R-H-A. Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance.

*Q: Thank you.*

BACHAR: It became CPA, the Coalition Provisional Authority. ORHA was -- how can I say this nicely? -- very ineffective.

*Q: That's it. That sounds nice.*

BACHAR: Extremely ineffective. They were, they did not come in I think fully organized and they didn't have the expertise that they needed. The expertise they did need was interagency so you had people from different agencies bringing in their own culture and their own vocabulary to the table and it took a long time for the [unclear] to get together. So, giving it to you from a military point of view with civil affairs guys, you know, we get money. Military money from the combatant commander from the CENTCOM commander called CERP [Commander's Emergency Response Program] fund C-E-R-P -- and I'm bringing up an acronym and I can't elaborate what it means. Something emergency repair something, but its CERP funds. We had an initial pool of ready cash. We as the military could go in and do quick-fix neighborhood style projects which is what civil affairs does. That's our job, to go into civilian communities and assist them and thereby enhance our mission, the mission of the army and the people of Iraq by getting these projects underway.

*Q: Were those CERP funds earmarked for Iraq?*

BACHAR: Yes.

*Q: Okay.*

BACHAR: They went down to the brigade level on the army side and in civil affairs we didn't have our own CERP funds, but we could go to the brigade commanders and get their, we would go to them with proposed projects because basically as a civil affairs unit, that's our job to advise the infantry where their funds should best be spent. We

would present them with a list of projects and they would sit there and decide what to do with their funds.

*Q: How did you decide what projects to propose?*

BACHAR: Basically priority, concentrated first on necessities, anything involving food, water, shelter and clothing. You could concentrate on necessities first and then go onto other things. I mean we wanted to make sure people had running water first. If our choice was between running water and rebuilding, reconstructing a sidewalk in a park for example, we would do it in a priority fashion.

*Q: I understand and am curious whether you developed your priorities or whether you were working from some kind of standardized methodology for determining priorities.*

BACHAR: We would be developing our own priorities rather than using any kind of methodology.

*Q: Was there Iraqi participation in that process?*

BACHAR: Initially, there was not. When we first got there, before it was the Green Zone, there was not Iraqi participation. We would simply hear of a neighborhood in Baghdad. When I say neighborhood, I need to elaborate. A district like the Aadhamya district or the Rusafa district or something like that that was out of electricity. We would send a public utilities team from out of our civil affairs unit to go assess their electrical problems. Whatever you're assessing, whether it is electrical, water or whatever type of utilities, of course the Iraqis [are] there on the scene, the guy who is the head of the power plant is going to make the case that we really need to get this power fixed or the guy who is the head of the water treatment plant is going to say [what] we really need. Naturally.

*Q: There is some participation of Iraqis right there.*

BACHAR: Right, so I guess I'm backtracking a little bit. I have to take back a little bit of what I said, so, yes, they would participate in so much as they would assist us with the assessments in terms of prioritizing. Once we got in place, by the time I had left almost a year later, we had civil military operation centers all over Baghdad and we were in the process of civilianizing them, turning them over to the Iraqis, and we renamed them and we called them GICs, General Information Centers, which sounds somewhat innocuous in English, but we were told in Arabic that it kind of encapsulates everything. The Arabic translation of that, an Arab understands that if you go there you're going to get a certain set of services. By the time we left we had nine of these general information centers all over Baghdad and we were probably 100% Iraqi input into these types of concerns by that time. They were telling us and that was part of our effort not only to help rebuild the infrastructure there, but also to build civil society in Baghdad. By the time we left, it's like we're not spending a dime. You guys form a council, you tell us what you need and we'll try and make it happen to the best of our ability, but you run the



show and we'll come in and assist where we can.

*Q: When you use the term civilianizing, are you referring to American participation?*

BACHAR: No, the Iraqis, Iraqi civilians running the operation, not American citizens.

*Q: The Americans, you were a combination of civilians and military personnel, but both aspects were going to be removed and it was going to be a 100% Iraqi operation?*

BACHAR: Yes. Right. Yes.

*Q: Okay, well, let's move on to, I've got eight numbered questions and we'll go onto number two, but they all have subparts. You may have seen them on the website. Did coalition authorities have a development plan? Related to that, what were CPA goals and objectives?*

BACHAR: Okay. Here is the original problem. The short answer to the question is they had a development plan. You know what, no, I don't think that they had a development plan. What they had was a "disaster response" plan. That's what they had, hence the initial acronym of ORHA, Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance. The reason why they renamed it to CPA is because the humanitarian assistance wasn't required. They were anticipating one million IDPs (internally displaced persons); there wound up being 40,000 and they anticipated one million. They anticipated having to bring the World Food Program in in a big way and feed millions of Iraqis. That never happened.

*Q: It didn't happen because the food distribution system worked okay.*

BACHAR: The food distribution system worked okay. Iraqis stayed in their homes and that was probably the biggest thing and that was I would say one of our biggest successes in the military was that we were able to, when we were advancing to Iraq, it created a climate where Iraqis felt they could stay home and did not have to flee before us. They didn't. They stayed at home. The disaster response plan pretty much was OBE [overtaken by events]. There was no disaster. There was no humanitarian disaster to respond to. Then they had to shift gears and become development, have to have a development plan, and in my view again it was really by fits and starts and very slipshod at the very beginning and it got better as time went on, but you never really got the impression that CPA had, that there was an overall, overarching focused plan. All the separate parts of CPA all went and did their thing, but you didn't really get the feeling that at some level up here that they were all talking -- you know what I mean -- and they just kind of went out and did their own little thing. Yes, the lack of a really coherent well-executed plan was frustrating for civil affairs, for not only what we do, but if I could even stereotype I mean the army plans everything to the nth degree.. This seemed to be kind of at the other end of the scale.

*Q: Let me see if I can argue with you a little bit. I remember reading one of the generals*

*in testimony said, in a military campaign you can only plan your initial move, after that...*

BACHAR: After the first initial contact the plan falls apart.

*Q: Yes, then you're responding to whatever happened and from then on everything is more or less ad hoc, so I wonder how realistic it is to expect the CPA to have a plan. You've already described how they anticipated a kind of humanitarian disaster. That didn't turn out to be the scenario, so they had to shift gears and respond to what actually happened and of course they did it in fits and starts.*

BACHAR: Right.

*Q: Can you suggest, if you had been in charge, how much better could they have done?*

BACHAR: Okay, I think that the military analogy that you presented was basically correct except that in the military you offer a commander courses of action. Okay, so the course of action A, B and C, Plan A, B and C as it were. I think that as far as the initial planning for ORHA or CPA is that they assumed there was going to be a humanitarian disaster and they planned for it. What could have been done better is nobody asked the question what if there isn't one, then what's our plan? I think that's probably where I was going with that. They just focused on there were going to be a million internally displaced people we've got to feed and nobody said, "what if there isn't?"

*Q: There were administration people who said we're going to be greeted by flowers and cheering crowds.*

BACHAR: We were. We were initially. That's true.

*Q: You were greeted, but there's a lot of war damage and the economy is in a shambles.*

BACHAR: Yes, that's true, but we were actually, that was the, that's what I meant by that. When no humanitarian disaster existed, then there is no backup and then it became kind of *ad hoc*, well, now we're switching full into the development assistance mode and that's kind of what I meant. There wasn't even the anticipation of the possibility that that might happen whereas in a military plan there is that anticipation, but understanding the general's comment that our first contact that our whole plan goes out the door. You still have to plan to get to that first point of contact, too.

*Q: Okay, I said I was arguing with you, but partly just to get more of that texture out of your answer. What were the results of quick start projects and other programs to get cash in circulation? Were you involved in that?*

BACHAR: Yes. The results of quick start programs, as I said, anything that did not involve looting was much more, I mean a quick start program could be "let's get all the water pumps working", and they'd all be looted the next day. Once you could get wrapped around again a security issue, that worked out fine, but as far as getting cash into

the system... Let me move on and not beat that to death. The Iraqis... that was pretty easy to do and had a very immediate effect. Your average Iraqi when we got there... Saddam had set up an economy where the average person was making about two dollars a month and they had a whole book of ration cards. They would ration for their food, ration for cooking oil, ration for gas for their stoves. They had ration books for everything and they'd get \$2.00 a month.

*Q: They had to buy those things with the \$2.00?*

BACHAR: No, they had their ration for necessities.

*Q: Ration cards were a medium of exchange?*

BACHAR: Yes and then you get paid \$2.00 a month. Basically your necessities were taken care of, if you were politically acceptable that is. Your ration book was everything. If you upset Saddam in some way, or the powers that be, or you couldn't get a ration book, you'd have to rely on the good graces of your relatives or your friends or somebody or you'd just starve to death. There was a lot of pent up demand for currency and there was a lot of frustration by Iraqis. We had more stories than I can tell of doctors, teachers, nurses and professionals, everybody is coming in and saying, I'm making \$2.00 a month. I'm a doctor and I'm making \$2.00 a month.

*Q: So, with the regime, with the fall of the regime, the ration cards disappeared, is that right, they're no longer used?*

BACHAR: I think that we kept the ration cards in place right after we got there to avoid total chaos because if you make the... I'm not exactly sure, I can't get a clear answer on how they, what eventually became [of them]. The ration cards eventually went away, but when we first got there we kept them in place so that the whole thing just wouldn't go into utter chaos. As far as pumping cash into the economy especially American dollars, notwithstanding the GIs spending their own personal money, we had huge sums of cash that we were able to pump into the economy into a number of different areas. We were training security police -- again, this is back to the security issue -- and immediately started a massive training program to train FPS, facility protection services. These people would guard not only ministry buildings, but things like the water pump and the power plant. These guys were getting paid I want to say something like \$50 a month which was unheard of. We got that money into the system. We had our public education team train and set up parent teacher associations and then we funded the parent teacher associations and gave them \$750 a year budgets so that they could work with their schools. I think that we were very effective in pumping cash into the economy and the fact that we would take Saddam dinars for dollars also helped to stabilize, not to repeat the currency thing again, but I think we were very successful in getting cash into the economy and at the same time building civil society. We hired; probably over the whole country, thousands of interpreters were hired. These people were making \$20 a day. They were making \$400 a month, so if you were an Iraqi interpreter, you're in the top 1% of the population.

*Q: I had that experience working in recent elections in Russia. Our interpreters got a lot more than that and they were right near the top of the scale. We had university professors who were clamoring for these short term interpreting jobs because they paid much better than the university.*

BACHAR: We had a total of 57 interpreters eventually that worked for us at the Iraqi assistance center and not a few college professors, medical doctors; why not at \$400 a month? If you could speak English, go work for the Americans. I think that was a resounding success.

*Q: I know you said you don't recall exactly how ration cards disappeared, and I certainly don't know. I'm gathering expertise by listening to people like you, but one thought that occurs to me is if you want to get cash out to ordinary households, well, you could have them exchange their ration cards for cash. That gets rid of the ration cards and gets them into a cash economy.*

BACHAR: That may have happened, but I don't want to speak to that because I don't know for sure. That may have happened.

*Q: You don't know also if ration cards continued to be issued after the fall of the regime.*

BACHAR: Ration cards continued to be issued as long as the oil for food program was actually dispensing food. Yes, you're right. The stuff's coming back to me now. Yes, as long as oil for food was in place then the ration cards were in place because that system was already in place to get food for ration cards.

*Q: Pardon my ignorance, but when did the oil for food program end?*

BACHAR: I think it was in November and where the account for oil for food was given by the UN to CPA I believe in November of 2003. Actually the program didn't end, but it morphed to a point where I think ration cards were phasing out and I think the oil for food money was being bankrolled by CPA, but from there I'm not sure. I'm not sure what they did with it. I'm not sure if they would either subsidize food or... I don't know. I just don't know.

*Q: Any observations about how these quick start projects and other programs to get cash in circulation meshed with longer term measures? Actually that's a little bit what we're talking about, long term transformation to get rid of ration cards to get on a cash economy.*

BACHAR: One of the successful things we did that we replicated from Afghanistan is a currency exchange, reissuing new currency, getting the Saddam currency out of circulation, putting Iraqi currency into circulation. That was a huge success. That's something we did well in Afghanistan and did well in Iraq. Also, we had two or three guys working on helping the Iraqis set up an accountable, transparent stock exchange,

which just opened up a couple of days ago. I was just reading it in the paper finally. That, I've just been reading in the paper today, everyday the number of shares being traded is going up by multiples of 10 and 20 in the stock exchange as word gets out. That's a huge infusion of cash. That's I believe \$143,000,000 in the last week has been injected into the Iraqi economy.

*Q: Interesting. Any speculation on where that cash is coming from? People's mattresses?*

BACHAR: That cash, yes, that cash and a lot of Iraqis horde, most Iraqis horde cash because they don't trust banks. During the Saddam era banks were not to be trusted. A lot of it was for reasons that surveillance, police surveillance and things like that and they were worried that Saddam and his sons would take the money out of the banks. After they left, the banks were all looted and you had regular bank robberies. So, Iraqis tend to keep their cash in their house.

*Q: They have enough confidence now in the integrity of a stock market that they can invest with some confidence, maybe with their fingers crossed?*

BACHAR: Yes. I think when I read that article this morning my biggest concern; my worry is about an Albanian situation where there might be a bubble or a Ponzi scheme or something like that. There is so much pent up energy out there and so much pent up cash that I worry about a bubble.

*Q: I thought of that when you mentioned it, but I wasn't going to ask.*

BACHAR: No, that's a very real concern of mine for their sake, the sake of the Iraqis, that that doesn't happen. There's enough checks and balances in place that will, if not prevent it, at least mitigate the effects of something like that happening. I think that, but the structures, the long term structures are in place. The other thing that the CPA did very well is that when I came back home I should tell people that Iraq has one of the freest economies on earth. The tax and regulatory burden on the Iraqi economy is almost non-existent. If you import goods into Iraq you pay a 5% import duty, other than that, as of right now, I personally am not aware of any formalized method of taxation anywhere in the country. You pretty much get to keep what you earn. The whole thing. Everything. There are pension funds that have been established, but the initial funding of the pension funds have been from the United States, from this reconstruction money; pumping money into their pension funds. So, eventually they're going to have to get taxed because they're going to have to fund their pensions and they're going to have to fund workmen's compensation and various things like that, but the economic, the long term economic structure, barring a regime taking over that would overturn these things, the economic structure that we have put in place over the long term is a very good one. It's very favorable, if the security wasn't so bad (which is the worst situation right now).

I mean as an American, I wouldn't personally do it, but I would advise an American who wanted to go to a foreign country and open a business, I'd go to Baghdad. Go to Iraq to

open a business. If it wasn't for the security problem, the climate is so favorable to do that kind of thing. There are a lot of Iraqis out there that are becoming entrepreneurs. There is a huge informal economy in Iraq and I think that the official numbers or the numbers that get put out in the news, I just know for a fact are just wrong because they're getting, I don't know where they're getting their numbers from. They might be getting them from an official government agency, but I mean you can just go out on the street or you can take samplings and come up with who is really unemployed in Iraq or how many people there really are and it's a lot less than what's being reported.

*Q: You say there's a very large informal economy. If there's no tax collection and not much of an operating government, you could almost say the whole economy is informal.*

BACHAR: Yes. Yes.

*Q: Except for people being hired, being paid on government payrolls I suppose.*

BACHAR: Right. Yes, that's fair. That's a fair thing to say.

*Q: That can't last for very long.*

BACHAR: Yes because a lot of American reconstruction money and other countries' reconstruction money is subsidized. There are a lot of issues again with the civil affairs, the Iraqi assistance center that I was in. We dealt a lot with pension issues. I mean you have people who retired out of Saddam's army and they're just military officers or enlisted men who served 20 years in the Iraqi army and they're drawing a pension. Well, when we got there of course that whole system just evaporated. These people, the fixed income folks, need to be taken care of. The guy served his country honorably for 20 years or a government employee served his country honorably for 20 years or 30, whatever it was, and they need to get -- war widows from the Iran Iraq war, lots of war widows, now their pension just evaporated when we got there because the whole structure went away. Yes, eventually the economy is going to become more formalized because those folks are going to have to be taken care of.

*Q: Now, all of those that you just mentioned who were receiving money from government pension funds or war widow funds, was that picked up early on by the CPA or its predecessor?*

BACHAR: No, not early on and there was a bit of contention between U.S. army civil affairs and CPA because we were sounding alarm bells for this stuff and it did not happen early on. We had to heckle the CPA to get them aware of this problem. We were actually to the point where we were taking collections, personal collections out of our wallets for hard cases, for elderly war widows with no kids who were living on the pension of a dead husband from 15 years ago with nothing. We were passing the hat around the office so these people could pay their rent and so that they could get something to eat.

*Q: You would find out about those cases.*

BACHAR: They would walk in.

*Q: That was what your office did. Anybody could walk in.*

BACHAR: Yes. Even after the Green Zone was established and the security was provided we would see 400 Iraqis a day on average. There were pension issues, detainee issues, compensation issues, "a tank ran over my car." That type of thing. We dealt with about 400 cases a day. We had 57 Iraqi interpreters and there were 24 of us military types, U.S. and coalition. We had coalition members from seven different countries and a large part of our day was doing this type of casework. CPA did not respond to it as quickly as they needed to do to take care of these people on fixed incomes.

*Q: Okay, this is very interesting to me and it goes a little bit outside of the basic questions, but you said there were 24 coalition personnel, plus a large Iraqi staff, mostly interpreters. You would hear cases; in effect, people would come in and say "here's my problem" and you would adjudicate them on the spot and make decisions, and could you then compensate people?*

BACHAR: No, we did not have the authority to compensate on the spot. What we would do was take their cases and the regular army guys, the guys with the CERP funds I was telling you about earlier, the brigade commanders, they would have judge advocate general (JAG) attorneys. We would take these case files and the JAG officers would come in periodically like Monday, Wednesday and Fridays and review case files where there were monetary claims. Then in a very painstaking process that somebody had a car, where a tank ran over their car, this JAG officer would have to go out to the site, take a picture of the car, and it was a process.

*Q: Like an insurance adjuster.*

BACHAR: Yes, exactly. For compensation claims that had detainee issues we would have to take the case. A friend of mine at work said, "Well, you guys at civil affairs, you're kind of like the ACLU in Iraq because we would go and it's interesting." I'm going to go off case here a little bit to the Abu Ghraib prison thing I read the Taguba report and Brigadier General Karpinski, the head of the MPs [Military Police]. Among the people that she blamed for her failings was our civil affairs commander. I'm trying to say well, why was it our fault that your prisons were messed up and all these horrendous things were going on? I thought about it for a second and well, we were the guys who were always going up to Abu Ghraib with these poor people saying, "Why is her son detained? Why is her brother detained?" We were a very annoying thorn in her side, but that was one of the things we would do. If their son was detained because he was caught throwing a hand grenade at American forces, well, I'm sorry about that, but... Maybe one time in ten, or one time in 20, no one knew why this guy was detained. We would actually physically go up with these folks and spring their family members if nobody could come up with a viable reason why they were holding them.

*Q: Were they then sometimes released?*

BACHAR: Yes.

*Q: You kind of were a check on the process, a little bit more of due process to the detention system.*

BACHAR: Yes, I think more would be conveyed in the news, but having said that, one time in ten, one time in 20, there was a legitimate case where a gentleman should have been out of prison and not be there. The vast majority of the time, a mother would come in and say her son is in jail and she's concerned, but 90% of the time the son really did... They have a rap sheet on the guy and this is what he's done -- "Well, ma'am, I'm sorry, he's being held because he set off an IED." Sorry, there's nothing else we can do for you...

*Q: Right, but in the American justice system they're entitled to be shown what the changes are and so that is bringing greater transparency and due process to the system.*

BACHAR: That's one of the things we did and that was going off base and we would handle detainees. One of the best things we did which I really wish got more press was that we facilitated, out of our office, medical evacuations for medical hard cases to surrounding Arab countries that were very forthcoming, the wealthier Arab states, and flying Iraqi children out especially for medical treatment. The UAE -- the United Arab Emirates, -- was very good at this, Kuwait; Qatar was very good at this, Jordan as well. Children with heart valve problems or things that they couldn't get, surgical procedures they couldn't get in Iraq. We facilitated our public health unit, facilitated getting these children out of the country to get operated on. That was one of the other things that we did.

*Q: You were part of the screening for that?*

BACHAR: Yes. We had medical doctors on staff, army doctors that would actually screen cases and actually determine which ones would need to be evacuated out of the country and we would arrange for those evacuations..

*Q: These other Arab countries would agree to...*

BACHAR: Yes, we worked with some international NGOs as well. There was one NGO in Greece that took a number of patients as well, but the wealthier Arab sheikdoms were very forthcoming in that regard and are to be commended for offering up the ability to get these kids out and get them operated on. (END SIDE)

*Q: This is the second side of the first tape of the interview of Major Jay Bachar, Larry Lesser conducting the interview. So, you were talking about some of the other services that were rendered by your group.*



BACHAR: Yes, I don't have any recollection of a failed surgery or so on. The only type of thing that would happen, which is understandable under the circumstances, [is] if you get an Iraqi family into Dubai and they don't want to leave. But that's not a medical issue. We didn't hear of any medical problems that were unsolved or unsuccessful surgery or anything.

So, the compensation issues, again, back to the money issues, which I think is where you were going. The JAG officers would adjudicate those and if they were adjudicated in favor of the Iraqi he would pay cash to them on the spot. When the adjudication was final and they had the signed document, the Iraqis would come back to the Iraqi assistance center and if we owed you \$700 for your car he would just give him \$700 in cash and he'd sign a receipt or whatever the compensation claim was. If it was adjudicated in their favor, he would just pay it.

*Q: So the process was an expedited process even though it involved going to more than one level.*

BACHAR: Yes and they still had to come back several times. It was and when you're starting a system from scratch, we were making mistakes and they were procedural. There are always efforts to streamline the process to make things happen quicker and as army units rotate in and out you've got to completely reeducate the new JAG officer coming in. You've got to get him [to] read into what's going on and he's got to get his learning curve going, but a mechanism was in place to expedite these things, but it was still... If I was to put myself in the shoes of an Iraqi seeking compensation it was still a painful bureaucratic process although there were checks and balances, and it was a process. And if you work through the system, you would get paid, but they still had to come back. I have to be fair, they still had to come back three or four times to get their cases solved and it was a pain.

*Q: Okay, fair enough. I thank you for correcting my Pollyanna interpretation there. Let me move on and again I think we're going to find that you've already said some things about this question. We're asking what was the impact of some specific initiatives or challenges. For example, de-Baathification.*

BACHAR: Okay, de-Baathification in my view went too far. CPA fired the first four levels of bureaucrats in every Iraqi ministry -- because you had to be a Baath party member -- and they went too far. They drove down too far. We immediately felt that in civil affairs because we were involved and again this is a little bit out of my lane, but the folks I know that were involved in governance, we were just having a hard time finding, once you got rid of the first four tiers of people, when you get four levels deep, even in Washington, D.C. when you're getting four levels deep you're getting down to the experts in there, you're not getting into the political appointees, you're getting people that know their jobs, that have been there working, and you strip all that away and there's going to be a loss of efficiency and there's going to be a loss of institutional knowledge. They cut too deep and our governance people are having a heck of a time training people

up or getting the ministries to function properly. That would be my overarching comment about de-Baathification.

*Q: My own history of this is not too steady. You said the CPA fired the first four levels. That makes it sound like it didn't happen immediately.*

BACHAR: That happened immediately.

*Q: Okay, so by the time you came in there.*

BACHAR: They got rid of them. They signed an order, a de-Baathification order that was signed either by Jay Garner or Paul Bremer and they decapitated all the ministries.

*Q: Okay. I was just put off by 'decapitation.' When I used to work in the NEA bureau in State, which is also sometimes referred to as the crisis bureau, I had an officer working under me, an excellent young woman, and whenever people would say something like, 'I'm kind of shooting from the hip here.' she would say, 'We don't use that \_expression in NEA.' You just put me in mind of that. So, what happened to those people? You decapitate the ministry down four levels, so those people are out of work, but they haven't been accused of crimes against humanity or anything like that. They're just put out on the street.*

BACHAR: They're out on the street and then that also creates an adversarial element in the Iraqi society because these are, when Saddam reigned, these were powerful well-connected people. So you wind up finding that a lot of future anti-coalition militant cells are being run and organized by these guys. What you've done is, you know, no matter what you think of them, they have some sort of leadership ability out there. They have a following. They have connections. They have a network and you just arbitrarily fire this guy and put him out on the street, guess what his network becomes. The network becomes an IED factory and you had that additional problem in addition to the fact that the ministries then became non-functional. You only had managers up to about the mid-level and then you had to run these ministries and you had to bring in CPA civilians and civil affairs officers and there wound up being about 200 civil affairs soldiers working at CPA, 200. If you look at the organization chart at CPA there shouldn't have been any, but there wound up being 200 and we had to fill these holes. We had civil affairs majors and lieutenant colonels and colonels running ministries because CPA fired these people and didn't have anybody to put in their place, so you needed people with that kind of expertise. We had a civil affairs lieutenant colonel who is a town mayor out in Colorado and he basically had to put together a Baghdad city council for example. He was functionally, for a while, the mayor of Baghdad. There wasn't anybody.

*Q: Right. Okay, additional challenges. You talked about exchange of currency and you probably don't need to add anything to that, but that was a success story. You sort of talked about sabotage in connection with looting so I think we'll skip that for now, too. What about corruption?*

BACHAR: Oh, it's pandemic in Iraq, absolutely pandemic and I think that, of course I'm applying our sort of Western definition of corruption. The Iraqis of course I think would beg to differ and not necessarily call it that. But we were able to, I think, show a lot of Iraqis over time that by whatever name you call it, whether it's corruption or connections or the way you do business, it has kind of a corrosive effect on what you're trying to do. It's endemic in Iraqi society and I think that it was a huge problem. What happens there for us on the civil affairs side is that you come in with your own background as an American, and I think that most of us started out naively, just as if somebody said something they weren't lying. Most Iraqis come into a discussion from an angle, a negotiating angle, and they're not necessarily telling you the truth, but they're conveying information to you in such a way that they think is going to reap them maximum economic gain.

*Q: That's a very nice way of putting it.*

BACHAR: Yes, so basically you had to, by the time, well, not by the time I left, after we'd been there three or four months you would automatically assume that whatever this Iraqi person was telling you was a lie. What we had to do over time and what we tried to explain to these people, it's really something. They would lie when they didn't have to lie. Again, we weren't mad at them. After 35 years of living under Saddam and surviving, this is survival skill. The corruption and the lying is all a survival skill. Many times we would have two or three discussions with an Iraqi about something and we'd finally get to the truth and we'd say, "Why didn't you just say that that's what you needed? There's nothing wrong with what you want. Why didn't you just say that right up front? Why did we have to start with your sick grandmother? Just tell us." Again, it would tend to be very frustrating.

The way we worked with that, the way we kind of cut through that, we had -- and this was a very good, whoever came up with this plan had a good idea -- we had in the Iraqi assistance center three interpreters who were contracted by Titan Corporation. It could be any corporation, it just happened to be Titan. These three interpreters were naturalized American citizens. One was from Iraq, an actual Iraqi, one was from Lebanon and one was from the Sudan; naturalized American citizens with security clearances and they were interpreters. What you would do was get in the habit of having one of them with you when you talked to an Iraqi and then you'd get immediate feedback. Is this guy telling me the truth? What's this guy's angle? That would cut to the chase a lot quicker that way. These are skills we developed over time or if we had trusted Iraqi interpreters, that we felt that the confidence level, was there with our stable of 57 interpreters.

*Q: The three you were referring to are not part of the 57?*

BACHAR: No, they came with us. They were in one of the Humvees heading north.

*Q: Fluent Arabic speakers.*

BACHAR: Yes, native speakers. Yes, but are now American citizens.

*Q: But from the U.S. side.*

BACHAR: Yes, but anyway, the point is that corruption is a huge problem in Iraq. It's still a huge problem and it's institutional. Iraqis consider what we call corruption as just either cost of doing business or the way you do business. It's a huge, huge problem and hopefully by setting an example by creating transparent institutions that will hopefully be rigorously enforced that the degree of corruption will go down. It's bad.

*Q: It sounds like in part what you're describing... I know you've attributed a good part of it to 35 years under a very repressive regime, but there may be a cultural thing as well so that part of the solution is knowing how to work with it.*

BACHAR: Right. Knowing how to work with it is part of the solution, but the danger that we found is that you've got to be careful that you're not stepping over the line especially in a military uniform where we have the uniform code of military justice that we have to, that's on our backs, and you might do something that will get something done that is kind of, while you're being understanding you're getting something done, you could be violating military law. We had statutes that we had to be very careful with. Yes, absolutely, there's a lot to be said for that, but for the military in particular, that danger exists and you've got to be careful with it. We don't have the flexibility. We've got this Napoleonic code that we have to be cognizant of that a U.S. civilian would perhaps not be and can have a little bit more flexibility.

*Q: Well, if I could go back to the basic information that you gave as we started. Did you have any Iraq assignment-specific training that helped sensitize you to what you would need to do in order to understand what was happening, to know not to take at face value what you heard even from sympathetic supportive people, but to try to get behind that: what's their angle? What are they interested in?*

BACHAR: Yes, we did have [specialized training] in civil affairs, the U.S. army civil affairs; there is a civil affairs command that is assigned to each major combatant command. We are civil affairs soldiers for CENTCOM. We have training. There's a week-long course called the "MidEast Orientation Course". We have training. We have Iraq-specific training. Even though, I think when you have this training you get to a solution to a problem quicker, but you don't necessarily. I think the degree of lying caught us by surprise. I think that we were as civil affairs soldiers and because of this training we were able to react to it quicker. I'll give you a good example: an Iraqi person would lie to an infantry soldier and he would say oh, they're all liars. They're just liars, you can't trust any of them. Whereas a civil affairs soldier who has had training will take a step back and go okay, he's lying, but wait a minute, let's put this in context here. Hold on; let's think about this for a second. Then you start remembering and you think well, you know what, that's kind of how they do things here.

*Q: 'Let's come back in on it and maybe we can get the truth out of the interview with skillful questioning, taking a little bit of time with building rapport.'*

BACHAR: Right. Because I think if I was an infantry sergeant and we were having this interview I think you'd get different answers from me. I think you'd say, all Iraqis are liars, you can't trust them, period. End of discussion. They didn't have that and they're not oriented to that necessarily. As civil affairs is part of our job, is to get trained and to get cultural awareness and all that kind of stuff into the mix.

*Q: After the training, there is no substitute for actually experiencing and doing it and discovering that oh, yes, this is going to be harder than I realized.*

BACHAR: Our light bulbs go on and something will happen and you go, oh, yes, I remember that from the class we had. Look at that, there it is. Oh, yes, I forgot about that. I forgot there is a five day holiday after Ramadan where you can't get anything done, where you party for five days, that kind of stuff.

*Q: If I can tell you one little anecdote from my Russian election experience recently, my partner and I -- a Dutch woman; fortunately she spoke Russian and I didn't, but we had an interpreter and we worked through the interpreter. We were interviewing a communist party official; the Communists were running candidates in these elections also. After 10 minutes of the interview, which had not been scheduled (so we knew he was a reluctant interviewee), he was interrupted by a telephone call. My partner said, let's get out of here, we're not going to get anything out of this. Well, I said, give me a little time here; I think this may turn out to be interesting. After he came back from his phone call I asked him one or two more questions and he just started talking and talking and telling how frustrated he was about this and telling us the inside story about an incident that had been in the newspapers - and it turned out to be an extremely productive interview, but you had to give it a little time until he sort of, his light bulb went on when he went, you know, I've been wanting to talk about this. I'm going to tell these international observers. A certain amount of it is just experience and occasionally being lucky. Were there any other particular challenges or surprises that you ran into that complicated your life that you had to figure out how to deal with that you weren't entirely prepared for initially?*

BACHAR: Yes.

*Q: Maybe not, but if something occurs to you, you can always add it later. I'll move on. I asked you earlier a little bit about the UN oil for food program after you mentioned it. The questions here are what happened to that program?*

BACHAR: As I say, the UN turned it over to CPA in November.

*Q: What was the impact of terminating the program or turning it over to CPA?*

BACHAR: Not sure other than the fact that it gave. Oil for food was also run out of the Baghdad convention center in the basement and it was separate and distinct from what we were doing. So, I'm not sure what exactly happened. I know CPA took it over in

November and I know that they were still using food rationing cards, but trying to phase that out, but I'm not exactly sure. I can tell you this, just anecdotally is that the Iraqi people despised the oil for food program. They knew way ahead of us and I'm sure you've read in the news or heard in the news about all the corruption in the high levels and the skimming and all that.

*Q: Corruption in the United Nations...*

BACHAR: The United Nations, people skimming money and Saddam paying people off, that was common street knowledge when we got there. That was news to us. Your average Iraqi on the street knew that this was happening and were very... I think that -- again this is anecdotal -- I certainly don't have anything to back this up, but I never came across an Iraqi that had anything good to say about the UN or the French because they felt that the French kept Saddam in power all these years. Their attitude toward the UN and the French took me by surprise. I had no clue. They, you know, when the UN building was bombed in August of last year and most Iraqis were like "Good. Get them out of here. Can't stand these people. They're just corrupt. They propped up Saddam and blah, blah." They felt that way about the French as well and we were taken aback by that. You wouldn't necessarily associate, I don't know those type of feelings or whatever. I just didn't expect it. I didn't expect that kind of thing.

*Q: That's an interesting area. I wouldn't expect it either and I don't know enough about it. Here's a question that I really don't understand. What were public attitudes toward the economy and did they change over time? You described early on what the basic infrastructure looked like at the time when you first arrived. Do you have any observations about how much change had occurred in April, or in March actually?*

BACHAR: Yes, the way that question is worded, what are the attitudes toward the economy. I think that the question is phrased and my personal observations, the economy is, the way that it is in Iraq right now, it's very entrepreneurial friendly. There are just small businessmen sprouting up by the hundreds and by the thousands all over the country. By the time we left, there were markets and market stalls and street vendors and things just choking all the roads. Everybody has got a plethora of goods and services available. I think that I would hazard a guess in saying that the Iraqis are probably pretty happy about that. They're mostly worried about their security right now. That's going to be their number one overarching issue and there is probably some underemployment going on and things like that, but I think that the ability of just some guy to go out with a pushcart and make some money I think was very energizing to the Iraqi people. The fact that Americans are ready consumers and have money to spend also really [helped]. We had no problem if we needed to cater an event at the Baghdad Convention Center, if we were having an NGO meeting or something like that. I had a whole plethora of caterers I could choose from to compete for business to bring food in, to do anything. Cell phones, anything you wanted. CDs, movies.

*Q: When the demand comes, plenty of people step up and say I can do that for you.*

BACHAR: The structures are in place to do that now. The informal market structures are in place to do that. I have a thumb drive; it's like a memory stick, a computer memory stick. It's about this big, it's about two inches long and it has enough memory of about 500 floppy disks that I got in Baghdad. I didn't even know what it was. I said, what is this thing?

*Q: Where was it manufactured?*

BACHAR: I think it is Chinese or Japanese, I'm not sure, but I'd never heard of it. We called them thumb drives because they're about as big as your thumb, but they hold the same amount of memory as 500 floppy disks, the one I have, the particular one I have. I'd never heard of them before. I go to Iraq to find out that these things exist. I sent one of my translators out to town once I'd heard about them. I said, can you price one out for me and buy it for me and so he did. It's just; there are whole districts in Baghdad that specialize in things. We used to go to the UN once a week before it got bombed and you go through the computer district in Baghdad which never existed before. Shop after shop after shop of computer hardware, software, and peripherals. Then you go through the home appliance district on the same street and just endless shops of washers and dryers and ceiling fans and floor fans and microwaves and refrigerators and so on and so forth. There are whole sections of town that were just neighborhoods that specialized in selling a certain array of goods.

*Q: The CPA didn't do that?*

BACHAR: No.

*Q: This was Iraqi entrepreneurs coming out of the woodwork?*

BACHAR: Exactly. All the CPA did and all the army did was probably to provide the structure where that could be done, meaning that they were free to do that. We didn't impede the person from doing that. No soldier came up and said, close your stall and go home.

*Q: But there also had to be currency or a currency equivalent so that people could buy.*

BACHAR: Right. They could competently trade on their currencies. Yes.

*Q: It occurred to me, it is not specifically in the questions on the sheet that all of the references that you've made to Iraqis stepping up have referred to males or businessmen, etc. Any observations about the role of women in Iraq in economic reconstruction?*

BACHAR: Baghdad by Iraqi standards and by Arab standards is a very cosmopolitan city. I think that you can say something good about everybody (and the joke is that Hitler loved animals, he was a dog lover). I think that Saddam in that light, that particular imprint of his rule was, comparatively speaking, he was somewhat secular and as far as women go, within Baghdad is very cosmopolitan. You have a lot of women. Now,

women business owners, where a woman might own a restaurant or a catering service, that was pretty hard to find. [But] probably three quarters of our interpreters were females.

*Q: The 57 interpreters?*

BACHAR: Yes, and Iraqis started up their own non-governmental organizations, their own NGOs. The vast majority of people running NGOs were women. A vast majority were females running Iraqi NGOs. So, personal services of that type, the women interpreters and independent contracting type of work. And of course you had female doctors in Iraq, female professors, female professionals.

*Q: Right. Technocrats?*

BACHAR: Yes, and on a personal service basis, a lot of women, but that's Baghdad. I'm speaking just of Baghdad. Once you get in the hinterlands it gets more traditional and you just find men. But in just the straight raw business, yes, you're not going to see a woman running a household appliance store. No, no. There's no women to be seen, nothing like that.

*Q: You talked about you wanted to set up an affair and talk to caterers. Food preparation is traditionally a women's occupation, but it was men who wanted to come in and make the meal?*

BACHAR: All men. Men owned the business and they had male help that would come in and be servers and things like that, but we would typically negotiate that service through one of our female interpreters. They would actually go out and get the bids. Personal service-type things that women get involved in, but again, there's Baghdad and there's the rest of the country. Comparatively speaking to the rest of the country, and to the rest of the Arab world, I think women in Baghdad were relatively very cosmopolitan and very liberated; still within our context, not, but within their context extremely so. A lot of Western dress. The Shia women would typically wear the headscarves, but the Sunni and the Christian women that live in Baghdad -- Baghdad has a couple hundred Christian communities, almost half a million in Baghdad -- they just dress in Western style. Interpreters would come to work in blue jeans. They could be walking down the streets in Washington and you wouldn't give them a second look in terms of what they had on.

*Q: Did you get out of Baghdad very much?*

BACHAR: Not a lot. I did get out a few times.

*Q: But you got out more for a break than for work?*

BACHAR: No, for a mission.



*Q: Oh, mission related stuff.*

BACHAR: For a mission, for a patrol or a security escort or something like that. Even though I describe the civil affairs mission, that was kind of five days a week. We worked seven days a week; we used to work all the time.

*Q: Why not eight or nine days a week?*

BACHAR: That's right. Five days a week was a civil affairs mission. Two days a week, everybody doubles as an infantryman. So, two days a week would be patrolling or a security escort, providing security escort for CPA officials or something like that. Two days a week we were infantry.

*Q: So, when you described the contrast between Baghdad and the rural areas, that's personal observation?*

BACHAR: Oh, I've seen it. Oh, yes, absolutely. Yes. The hinterland is very traditional, especially down south in the Shia parts. Very traditional. If you even see a woman, she's completely covered up and it is the older men who are out.

*Q: Okay, I'm going to move on. Did you have an opportunity to observe the status of the petroleum industry?*

BACHAR: No, not to observe the status of it. No, not really, and here's the reason why. The oil ministry was one of the few ministries that CPA left pretty much largely intact and it was the only ministry that CPA had no intention of privatizing, so what you had in the oil ministry is that because it was the oil, the lifeblood of their national income and things like that, CPA had that on very close hold. We may have had in civil affairs a couple of liaison guys to the ministry of oil, but we never touched it. That was sacrosanct. I personally don't have [any knowledge] and you won't find too many civil affairs guys who would know actually [do].

*Q: Then you probably don't have much if anything to say about the last part of that question. How much of Iraq's reconstruction was financed from indigenous sources?*

BACHAR: Don't know.

*Q: Yes, because you weren't at that end of the process.*

BACHAR: Right.

*Q: You were dispensing services and you weren't part of knowing exactly where the money came from.*

BACHAR: Yes. I couldn't honestly answer that question.

*Q: We may have a problem with the next bunch of questions for a similar reason. What was the impact of the U.S. supplemental appropriation assistance money?*

BACHAR: Oh, that was huge, yes, that impact was huge because that went through. We had a USAID person; three of them actually came up with us on our military convoy. Flak jackets and helmets and guns and everything. I mean they were armed, these USAID types and please don't point that gun at anybody, yes. They were with us and we had, I lived in a house that used to be owned by a Republican guard colonel. It was a very large spacious walled-in villa and we actually had some USAID people live with us. That supplemental was huge. The ability of USAID to dispense money rapidly for projects and it was, I'm trying to think of the exact agency, you've got to drill down to Bureau of Humanitarian Response, but you drill down further. The DART (Disaster Assistance Response Team) teams down in there and the OTI, the Office of Transition Initiatives. Their ability to dispense money quickly in a timely fashion to pinpoint industry was very good and was significant, the speed with which they did things and the effect that they had on the economy was very noticeable and very fast. You saw when that money came in what happened.

*Q: Can you situate for me again because of my own ignorance, a time frame, when was that impact first felt?*

BACHAR: I'm going to have to think about this. I'm thinking probably the last quarter of 2003 when it was first felt. October, November, December in there. Massive rebuilding of schools, refurbishing of schools was going on. Money was going to Iraqi NGOs to help in whatever their projects were. Infrastructure projects were happening, bridges being rebuilt. The type of stuff like that.

*Q: Who were the contractors for major development projects?*

BACHAR: They generally were and this was an education process too for the Iraqis. The primes were [companies] like Bechtel, KBR, Dyncorp. Large American primes. But they were, they had to hire Iraqis to do the jobs, to be the subcontractors and that was a huge education process because the Iraqis said, "Well, the Americans..." And of course the ACM, (the anti-coalition militants) are putting out the propaganda, "See, the big American companies are getting rich on your backs." And that wasn't happening. Those companies had to subcontract to Iraqi subcontractors or companies in order to get these things done.

*Q: They weren't hiring Iraqi laborers directly. They were subcontracting with Iraqi owned firms?*

BACHAR: They were doing both. They were hiring Iraqi managers, in-country managers.

*Q: To work for them for the prime.*

BACHAR: To work for the prime and having Iraqi contractors. We established the Baghdad business bureau and we ended up putting I think almost 2,000 Baghdad area businesses into a huge data base with a search engine, with a remarkable search engine so that a prime contractor could go in and type in a key word like concrete and hit search and then all the companies that dealt in concrete in Baghdad would come up with their president, board of directors, what they required to give all this information, what some of the projects were, digital photos if they had any, that kind of system. We created the Baghdad business center to facilitate all this as well.

*Q: What you're describing sounds like a darn good system.*

BACHAR: Yes, that was a good system.

*Q: For getting the work done through U.S. prime contractors and distributing work into the Iraqi economy.*

BACHAR: Yes, the biggest impediment was the information war, which we could have done better, because there was a perception that big American companies were -- you know, "There's no money for Iraqis. The big American companies were making all this money rebuilding Iraq." The information war, which we could have fought better, was to say hey, these big primes; they're just conduits, okay? We have Iraqi in-country managers who are hiring Iraqi subcontractors to do this work.

*Q: Just to be clear, who was that information war between?*

BACHAR: The anti-coalition militants and us.

*Q: Okay, so in other words, that's Iraqi opposition, primarily?*

BACHAR: Yes, that's right.

*Q: Again, this is outside of the framework of the questions, but I'm curious whether American media or international media played any role, or do you think they played any role, in making that an easier or tougher process?*

BACHAR: Tougher, tougher. That would take a whole other cassette tape that I would have to say that I would speculate that the vast majority of American soldiers if they, regardless of what their view was of the media in general, by the time they left Iraq we pretty much hated them. They are bald-faced liars. I had several run-ins. Being in the Baghdad convention center, CPIC (the Coalition Press Information Center), so all the news media people would go there in the building that I worked in to get their press credentials. So I'd see them all come and go from Ted Koppel to NPR to Agence France-Press, and the amount of just outright lying and fabrication that's perpetrated by the media. The things that they say are blatantly false and telling stories and making reports from Baghdad and knowing for a fact that they never left their hotel that day. I could just go on and on, but the media clearly, clearly as any soldier over there will tell you, have

an anti-U.S. agenda and are willing to propagandize falsehoods in furtherance of their own agenda. That is my opinion and I would think that would be the opinion of most of the military over there. And they operate under the assumption that the American military, whatever we tell them isn't true -- if they were asking me a question and I would tell them something. They operate under the assumption that I'm either lying to them or what I'm saying to them needs to be further checked for veracity. Like, "I hear you, but I want to get that validated somewhere." A very, very dim view of the media and I'm going to, you know...

*Q: I can hear that.*

BACHAR: Yes. Yes.

*Q: Okay, back to contractors. Did they hasten or retard reconstruction?*

BACHAR: You mean U.S. contractors?

*Q: Yes, the U.S. contractors.*

BACHAR: Yes, because depending on what you mean by "contractors" would depend on how I would answer the question. I would say that contractors that built things or did things would hasten reconstruction. I'm talking about KBR contractors where they're paving a road, where they're hauling gasoline, where they're hauling building supplies, constructing things. I think that that hastened reconstruction. Other types of contractors, which would be, and again you're asking for personal examples. USAID would often hire contractors that would help them to be consultants and I'm not sure that they really helped. In fact USAID sent a few of them packing. They would hire these consultants from maybe some of the big agencies downtown, like Development Associates International (DAI), and some of these big [organizations, like] Economics International. They would hire people at top dollar to come over and help them advise or consult them on reconstruction. They sent a few of them packing just because they were incompetent. I think that at that level they actually retard reconstruction, but the folks who actually hammer and nail there I would say facilitate. They're hiring Iraqi laborers to help them get things done, too. I kind of split that out, I don't know that services contractors helped in some cases and impeded.

*Q: Here are a couple of questions that I think are designed to further distinguish the more effective and less effective activities. Did the inflow of assistance money shift the emphasis to construction versus meeting basic human needs?*

BACHAR: Yes because I think that the basic human needs thing, other than just the utilities that kept getting looted, I think that that was not solved, but we were past that relatively early on. We were there to get these people electricity as long as we had somebody to secure the power plants, that kind of stuff.

*Q: But then it sounds like that shift in emphasis was a proper evolution of what was to*

*happen.*

BACHAR: Yes, I think so.

*Q: That the basic human needs... we already talked about the idea that they anticipated a humanitarian disaster and that turned out not to be such a major problem and so it kind of is normal, 'Well, basic human needs have been mostly stabilized, now let's get on to reconstructing or constructing the infrastructure...'*

BACHAR: Right.

*Q: What about the inflow of contractors (and I'm not sure exactly what that question is designed to get)?*

BACHAR: There were certainly a lot of them.

*Q: I imagine the implication is that there weren't so many in the first months and then there were a lot more.*

BACHAR: Right. I left Iraq on March 3rd and there were just, the place was swarming with contractors. As of today probably not as many because of the security problem, because they're being targeted and taken hostage and ambushed. When I left in the first couple days of March, the country was swarming with them. They were all over the place and doing a lot of the bricks and mortar type stuff.

*Q: Okay. There was a column I think it was in the Washington Post last week, it might have been in the New York Times because I read that also, somebody taking issue with the idea of having an American Embassy with more than 1,000 Americans.*

BACHAR: Oh, I read that. I agreed with about three-fifths of that column. I would quibble with a couple of his points. That was good. That was a good piece. That was the Post.

*Q: Okay. One's first impression is how can there possibly be work for so many different people? Aren't they going to be stepping on one another's toes? Aren't they going to be scrambling to get the interesting piece of the action?*

BACHAR: You're talking about the embassy folks?

*Q: These are embassy folks.*

BACHAR: Yes.

*Q: Because 1,000 is one hell of a lot of folks.*

BACHAR: Yes, and I think the point that I agreed with, the strongest because it was one

of our biggest frustrations, is that they're one-year tours of duty. And the guy who wrote it, I believe is also a retired Foreign Service officer.

*Q: I think that's right.*

BACHAR: The point that he made, and really struck home with me where he was spot on, was the fact that they were going to be one-year tours of duty. He said, "This is the Middle East. By the time a year is up, you've established your relationships. You've gotten to know the people you work with and then you're leaving and another guy's coming in and he's going to have a learning curve." There's going to be this constant turnover, always a new person there trying to learn something and look at the culture you're dealing with. It's very frustrating to an Arab; personal relationships are very important to them and to get this relationship where you can call somebody your friend and then you're gone, you're back to the States, and I've got this new person I've got to deal with. That was one of our biggest problems we had with CPA was that they were bringing people in from various federal departments in the United States for three months at a time. Now, I'm a civil affairs guy, I'm there for 13 months and every three months the people I have to deal with at CPA switch out and that definitely delayed progress in a lot of fronts and creates a lot of frustration. Unfortunately, not that this is unique to Iraq by any means, but you had a lot of folks that clearly were there so they can put Baghdad on their resume and go home. They weren't there to actually do anything. That got very frustrating for those of us on the ground who were going to be there for 13 months and among others things were serving as infantry soldiers two days a week.

*Q: Are you not subject to something of the same criticism, not you personally, but your tour of duty was less than a year actually in country.*

BACHAR: It was about 11 months.

*Q: On the one hand we all recognize why it is difficult to staff up if you're requiring people to spend long tours there, but why is it more of a problem for the civil units in the American Embassy than it was in civil affairs on the ground, that you're in and out in less than a year?*

BACHAR: Because I think a civil affairs mission is inherently a short-term mission anyway. There's not going to be civil affairs army units in Iraq 40 years from now, presumably there will be a U.S. embassy 40 years from now. We're reservists, which is another thing. Even as a reservist, I was mobilized for 13 months and now I think they've gotten it down to about nine months. As a reservist or a national guardsman we're civilians in uniform.

*Q: Those are very good reasons.*

BACHAR: Yes, so there's an inherent thing that causes us not to be there.

*Q: Yes, but then to look at it from the Iraqi side...*

BACHAR: Okay, I see where you're coming with that, but they understand that. Iraq is... I mean they had a draft. Most Iraqi men have spent time in uniform. I picked up an AK-47 off the battlefield. I had an Iraqi show me how to use it. This is just some guy. They understand military units come and go. I'd just leave it there.

*Q: Okay, fair enough. I asked the question because it seems to jump out, you know, a tour of duty for obvious reasons; we don't have a very large number of people who are going to spend long tours of duty there even if it is desirable. They go voluntarily, they're not going to volunteer to go for very long periods of time. That's just a built-in constraint to the system and you've got to work within that.*

BACHAR: Right. (END TAPE)

*Q: On the second tape, side one of the USIP Iraq Experience interview of Jay Bachar and this is Larry Lesser the interviewer, and we're ready to talk about the last substantive questions on my question sheet. Major Bachar, what were the goals and objectives of your efforts? I'm not sure why we leave that to the end. You could just as well start with that, but maybe now that you've gone through so much material, maybe now is the right time to ask.*

BACHAR: Okay. The Iraqi Assistance Center goals were to civilianize the civil military operation centers in the whole country, that is to turn them over to the Iraqi civilians. That was one of our goals. Another one of our goals was to work with Iraqi NGOs to establish an Iraqi-based NGO structure in the country that would not only bolster civil society in Iraq, but get to the point where Iraqi NGOs could perform a lot of the work that international NGOs were doing. Those were two of the major objectives we had. The other objectives that we had that we achieved were to have Iraqis at the national level handle detainee issues, medical evacuation issues and compensation issues. That was achieved. When I left the civilianization of the CMOC -- the Civil Military Operation Centers -- had taken place, but there was still U.S. military advisory oversight, so they were not completely stand-alone independent organizations. These things became the general information centers. There is still a lot of work to do on the NGO front for Iraqis; training Iraqi NGOs, getting them to understand the concept of how to do their jobs, and getting the Iraqi government to set up a framework. Well, the structure is in place for them to administer NGOs, but to do it in a non-intrusive way. So, that's still an ongoing work in progress, but those were the major goals and objectives of our work, my work in Iraq.

*Q: And it continues, right?*

BACHAR: Yes.

*Q: I mean your tour of duty ended, but...*

BACHAR: Yes, but the next rotation is in doing the same thing. OYF2, rotation two, is

doing the same thing and rotation three will follow them I think in September and they will do the same thing, continue on.

*Q: You've alluded to this, but let me ask you to say explicitly, what were the successes and failures of the program while you were involved in it?*

BACHAR: My actual... the Iraqi assistance center?

*Q: Yes, I guess, because that's been our major focus.*

BACHAR: Okay, the successes and failures. Well, I think the successes I've pretty much just mentioned. I think that the biggest thing that I'll remember in a successful way was getting those little kids out for surgery, medically evacuating children and getting them surgery will probably always be my fondest memory of what I did in some small way to help Iraq and Iraqi people.

*Q: Did you see some of them when they came back?*

BACHAR: Yes.

*Q: So, you saw the before and after?*

BACHAR: Yes. Kids coming back and walking and talking and color back in their faces and they look like they had put on a few pounds and smiling and running around. I think that on a personal level those are probably our biggest successes. Like I said, civilianizing CMOCs was a big success. It's ongoing, but it is going the right way. Getting Iraqis to handle detainee issues and compensation, all issues, all those things were successful. It could become a failure, but I think the last thing I talked about was institutionalizing NGOs, the concept of NGOs in Iraq, training Iraqi NGOs and things like that, that could go either way at this point. That is a huge, huge job and there is a lot of resistance to that, not only from the anti-coalition militants, but NGOs are an element of civil society and you're injecting an element of civil society into a culture that's not used to having that kind of thing around. That could go either way and I'm not going to even pretend to be optimistic that there's going to be a solid NGO structure in Iraq in the future. Okay, that's a tough fight, that's going to be a hard one I think to do.

The other thing that I would consider, when I left I would say, you know, this is a failure, we didn't do this well: that would be just providing the simple needs of electricity more than eight or nine hours a day and clean running water and that kind of stuff. I really think we could have done that better. Even to this day, Baghdad doesn't have, these people, these folks don't have enough electricity going into their house. I can sit here and blame looters and saboteurs and that's part of the problem, but you know, I think that we could do a better job in helping them get that done.

*Q: Electricity generation is not the big issue.*



BACHAR: I think generation and distribution both. I think both. Clean water, sewage. We did have a lot of successes in things like trash pickup and things like that. That's another little success story, too is that there were just tons and tons of garbage piling up in the streets of Baghdad when we got there. We not only used our money, our CERP funds, to quick-start trash pickup, but there are now a lot of private garbage men running around Baghdad picking up trash. That was a huge success story, getting the trash up.

*Q: Who pays them?*

BACHAR: Now the private guys are probably paid by the United States ultimately at this point, the trash collectors, but again that's another thing that the city of Baghdad is going to have to develop a mechanism where they are going to be able to pay these guys. Garbage trucks were donated by countries like Denmark. A lot of European countries donated stuff like that. Yes, that's going to have to get picked up.

*Q: But a homeowner isn't paying the garbage collector?*

BACHAR: Not right now, but somewhere along the line, yes, they're going to have to get paid from somewhere, but right now the homeowner is not paying. I think that that needs to be done in terms of stuff that we did that good clean running water and electricity right now I would mark as if not a failure something that we're not winning. We're not winning that fight right now.

*Q: You're, as I conceive of it, you're kind of in the management business of these things. Are there specific management failures? Security and sabotage I guess you could say there's no way that's management, but you know, is there something about devising a better system or getting better performance from the Iraqis faster or is there something specific that you missed the boat on?*

BACHAR: Yes, this would be I think the American army in general and the CPA as opposed to the Iraqi assistance centers. As far as a security issue, the other thing they did when they were busy stripping off the four layers of the bureaucrats is that they dissolved the Iraqi army and they shouldn't have done that. They should have kept it intact and paid it and trained it and given it a brand new mission. In my specific job, security was a concern. But as civil affairs guys we don't post guard sentries, we're not involved in that security part or aspect of it in the military. Security could have been a lot better from the start, by America at large, in terms of not dissolving the Iraqi army. There's absolutely no question about that.

The other thing that we did, here's a failure at my level: information operations. Just the ability to get out to Iraqis that the things that we do right to let them know, because they don't know when we're doing something right. And, if something goes wrong and it's not our fault, to let them know. I think we failed at information operations. We would do something really good and it's "Okay, has anybody told the Iraqis?" Did anybody get on TV and say this? Did we bring Iraqi newspaper reporters out to check this out? We wouldn't get that good word out. Then again if something bad happened, if it wasn't our

fault we weren't getting out there saying it wasn't us, it was this other.

*Q: The reason for that failure is at least in part, it wasn't in your organization chart?*

BACHAR: Right, that wasn't in our organization chart, but the CPIC, the Coalition Press Information Center was right upstairs, the army public affairs office.

*Q: You could have told your story up there and they would understand the significance of it. In theory at least we had the means to do this.*

BACHAR: Yes. We could have done that better. Right. We had army public affairs officers. We could have done that better. That was a failure. The failure of the information operations was a failure on our part at the civil affairs level. We could have gotten our good things out much better than we did and we just didn't do it well enough.

*Q: Okay, fair enough. Following directly from that, what lessons did you draw from the experience? Of course you don't get two chances to reconstruct a country after a military invasion.*

BACHAR: Well, I think that the lessons... probably a lot of them we probably implicitly talked about. I mean, I put it in terms, well, if I had to go and invade a country again, well, I guess better. We did have cultural classes, but I think a little more intense cultural awareness classes than when we, our training before we go in. I mean we did get good training, but I think more of that, more intense training right down to the cultural "How do they shake hands?" That kind of thing.

*Q: Sure.*

BACHAR: Also, everything that we talked about in terms of disbanding armies, wiping out the top four layers of bureaucracy, those are all not-to-do things. Get better at the information operations. Back to the media, I pretty much savaged them, but I would accept the embedded reporters. The reporters that were embedded with us were the best reporters because they lived, ate and slept with it. They were with us all the time. They would report.

*Q: They had a better understanding of what the whole context was.*

BACHAR: Right. That's something I would do better. I think that now of course it would certainly be up to the news media to do this, but once the campaign is over and you're sitting in the enemy's capital, don't tell the embedded reporters to go home. Say, "Hey, your job has just begun. Now instead of reporting from a Bradley fighting vehicle and you're taking fire and you're reporting live from the front lines, now you're reporting from a neighborhood where the civil affairs unit just built a new school."

*Q: You could be embedded in the civil affairs unit when they're sitting at their desks at least to some extent.*

BACHAR: Right.

*Q: Let me follow up on the question of training, especially cultural sensitivity. I'm sure people would readily agree with, or certainly see the need for, what you're saying. I'm wondering if you see any need for some selectivity, greater selectivity, on who is sent in the first place. I've done a lot of training. I'm a mediator and I do some mediation training with people who are going overseas, and some people just really aren't cut out for cross-cultural kinds of interchange because their orientation is very resistant to it.*

BACHAR: That's true, but in a military unit I don't know how you do that because when you mobilize a civil affairs brigade, if you're in that brigade you're going. From a military perspective, while I agree with it in principal, I don't know how you do that because you mobilize a whole... I don't know how you do that in military context. The other problem is that they sent too many of us, too many civil affairs guys. They sent 1,300 of us into harm's way. We only needed 800. They didn't know that. You can't fault them. The underlying assumption was that there was going to be this huge humanitarian catastrophe. Our civil affairs original mission was going to be to run refugee camps. That was going to be our job. That's why they needed the 1,300 of us. Then we get there and there's no refugees.

*Q: Okay, so even if you had a selection process in place they would have been selecting for a different kind of job.*

BACHAR: Right. On the military side I don't know how you do it. And like I said they sent 500 more civil affairs soldiers than they needed to, but who knew? I don't know how you solve that. I don't know how. Do the planners plan and they decide what forces they need?

*Q: What did they do? Now you had work for 800, but you had 500 more people than that.*

BACHAR: That's another bone of contention. They decided to keep us all there rather than send the excess home in June, which they could have done. And now they're getting down to the third rotation in September and they're running out of people.

*Q: They're still running it on the basis of the original.*

BACHAR: 800?

*Q: Well, but how many are coming, how many came in in the second rotation?*

BACHAR: 800.

*Q: Okay, so they got down to the appropriate number.*

BACHAR: On the third rotation they won't be able to find 800. They're going to task organize it, so there's fewer.

*Q: I hope you kept a light backpack.*

BACHAR: Yes, well. They sent too many civil affairs, they mobilized too many. Who knew? That's fine, but in my personal opinion, along about June they should have sent 500 guys home in anticipation of future rotations and they didn't do it.

*Q: And because they weren't actually needed at the time, but they kept them there, what did those 500 do? Could you say who the 500 were or were they... was everybody doing less?*

BACHAR: That's the whole country. Was everybody doing less? Some people were doing less, but what wound up happening is that they filled a lot of void at CPA because, I think I mentioned this, but at one point there were 200 civil affairs people working at CPA. They were nowhere on CPA's organization chart, but they were vital to the functioning of CPA because CPA had slots where nobody was in them. They would fill it with the civil affairs guys because we happened to be there. That's CPA's problem. They came in and they didn't have everybody on the org chart that they needed and they were lucky that we found work for these extra 500 guys only because CPA, their manning wasn't up.

*Q: Okay, but to me with my Pollyanna orientation, that doesn't sound like such a bad arrangement.*

BACHAR: It doesn't unless you're a civil affairs guy looking at going back to Iraq again possibly.

*Q: Okay.*

BACHAR: If I have to be personal, if I have to go I'll go, I don't have a problem with that, but what I do have a problem with is knowing why I may have to go again because up front the corrective action wasn't taken, so I've got to go because you guys didn't get it right up here. It's not that I have to go, I don't care. If I've got to go; I'm in the reserves, I signed up, I volunteered, I have no problem with it, but it's like if you'd done it right up here, then perhaps I wouldn't have had to go.

*Q: Okay, a wind up question. What was life like for you? Were you pretty satisfied with the physical arrangements?*

BACHAR: Oh, yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. You won't get this answer out of an infantry guy, but the Green Zone was formerly and had some very, very upscale neighborhood of villas and small palaces.

*Q: I actually saw some of that in the DVD on the Iraq Experience.*

BACHAR: It's beautiful. It's almost like being at Walt Disney's version of Arabian Nights. I lived in a villa that was originally owned by a Republican Guard colonel. There were 14 of us living in the villa, but it had six bedrooms, two and a half baths, two balconies. We had a hot tub on the top floor balcony. We had a huge galley kitchen.

*Q: You didn't cook your own meals, I imagine?*

BACHAR: I didn't have to. We had three Iraqi maids.

*Q: How many people were living in this?*

BACHAR: Fourteen.

*Q: Fourteen.*

BACHAR: Yes, they did all the cooking, cleaning, all of our laundry. They did everything and we were paying them \$5 a day and so it was like a dollar a day to have everything done for us. These people were making \$15 a week in an economy when we got there where people were making \$2 a month? It was a win-win for everybody. No, are you kidding? We lived very large in downtown Baghdad.

*Q: Well, welcome back to...*

BACHAR: Reality.

*Q: Maryland.*

BACHAR: Yes.

*Q: Any advice that you'd pass on for future operations?*

BACHAR: For you people going to Iraq, you mean?

*Q: Yes, I think so. The major orientation for this project is what people should know who are going to be active in the American -- I don't want to say occupation anymore -- but the American participation in the reconstruction of Iraq.*

BACHAR: I'd say the number one bit of advice I could give would be concerning directly the number one problem, which was security. I think that if I found out that somebody was going to Iraq I would definitely want to offer up my two cents on how to stay safe and alive and how to be aware of your surroundings. That would be number one, I'd want to give somebody a security brief. The next thing I'd want to do for advice is give them a little background on Iraqi culture and the people and the next thing I would do is give them advice on the weather. Unless you've experienced 130 degrees and 30% humidity, I mean, you really have to. In those three areas is where I would advise people

I think rather than getting specific, rather than running a whole tape.

*Q: Sure.*

BACHAR: It would be security, culture and weather. Those three topics.

*Q: Let me just ask you for a slight elaboration on security. Did you observe bad security behavior on the part of colleagues?*

BACHAR: Yes.

*Q: People who unnecessarily put themselves at risk because they weren't aware?*

BACHAR: Yes. People, soldiers stopping at a street vendor. I'll give you an example. Soldiers stopping a street vendor and buying a cup of tea from the guy and sipping his tea and his rifle is sling-armed and he's sipping his tea and he's interacting with this guy. In the meantime over behind him on the rooftop are three guys with AK-47s that are taking a bead on him while he's standing there chitchatting with his helmet off talking to this guy who just sold him tea. That's a big example of just not being aware of your surroundings.

*Q: From what I read, not many sniper-type incidents have occurred.*

BACHAR: Generally, no.

*Q: There have been these bombings in areas that people congregate.*

BACHAR: Yes, you'll get sniping in places like Fallujah when the marines were in Fallujah. The way the Green Zone is situated geographically on a map, sniping would be kind of hard to do. As a matter of fact when we first got to Baghdad we had this house that was on the Tigris River. We moved to a house that was one block in from the Tigris, but when we first got there we would go up on the roof at night and sit there and smoke cigars and we would get shot at from the other side of the river.. It was so far away that they would fire tracers at us and the tracers would just burn out over our heads. That was our evening entertainment.

*Q: I might have some security advice for you actually.*

BACHAR: We knew that we were so far away that there was nothing in their arsenal that was going to hit us.

*Q: What about street crime, ordinary garden variety?*

BACHAR: It's bad, very bad. Saddam released 100,000 criminals from the prisons just before we invaded and the street crime for the average Iraqi is very, very bad. I feel very bad for them. They just have hardcore criminals out there that will just mug you for your

\$2 in your pocket and then kill you. It's bad. Break-ins, burglaries, that type of thing. Car thefts, drive-by shootings. Yes, crime is very bad. Again, this is 100,000 criminals released into the society, into the population. I understand that the Iraqi government is rounding these guys up now pretty effectively.

*Q: There was a big announcement that 500 or so were rounded up a couple of weeks ago.*

BACHAR: Yes and they're cordoning off neighborhoods and going in and that's something only they can do. We can't do that. We're now occupiers so we can't do that, but Iraqis can do that.

*Q: Right, but we are somewhat responsible for training Iraqi police.*

BACHAR: Yes, we are. Yes, we are. No, I'm very happy to hear that that's going on because the Iraqi people are really suffering from that type of stuff.

*Q: Okay, any other observations you want to make before we shut off the tape? I'm going to ask you offline to suggest other returnees we could interview.*

BACHAR: Yes and I'll go downstairs.

*Q: I don't see any need for putting that on the tape. Any other observations? Anything else about the process? How did you like this walk down recent memory lane?*

BACHAR: Oh, it was fun. I enjoyed it. You know, I mean the only other comments are that I really enjoyed my time over there. It was a great experience and probably the biggest in my life, most memorable experience in my life and I enjoyed it. I think that I would assume that you would find that most soldiers enjoyed it. That's it.

*Q: From the sound of it you have pretty warm feelings towards the Iraqi people generically.*

BACHAR: Yes, I do. I think that the Iraqi people generically have good feelings toward us. I always use this number, but I think 80% of Iraqi people generally don't have a problem with it, the 20% are the people that coincidentally kind of match up with Saddam's base that they're not on top anymore, they're not the big dogs anymore. They hate us, they always will, they'll never like us. I like the Iraqi people. I have good feelings about all of them, the Sunnis, the Shias, and the Kurds. They're good people and I am very concerned about them.

*Q: And the Turkmans and the Christians.*

BACHAR: Oh, yes, all of them. Yes.

*Q: Okay, on behalf of the USIP project I thank you very much for participating. I very*

*much enjoyed interviewing you. And so ends the interview of Major Jay Bachar. Thanks a lot.*