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

ERIC BAUER
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interviewed by: Barbara Nielsen
Initial interview date: October 21, 2004
Copyright 2004 ADST

Eric Bauer developed natural skills of cross-cultural communication as a result of his transition from the Navajo reservation where he grew up into a different American community that he experienced when he moved as an adult. Bauer has a varied professional background that includes training as an electrician, military service, head of a non-profit housing organization, and working as a local elected official. He is currently a contracting supervisor for Consolidated Engineering Services. During his time in Iraq, Bauer was a governance officer and database manager helping to set up neighborhood, district and city councils in Baghdad from October 2003 until April 2004.

One of Bauer's principal functions was to interview those individuals who wished to serve as public elected officials at the local level. He needed to determine whether those who applied were sufficiently motivated by public service and not tainted by loyalty to the Baath party ideology. This task was made difficult by the fact that professional advancement in Iraq under Saddam hinged on "active" Baath party membership.

Bauer describes the very marked success of the efforts he was engaged in to refurbish the local schools, finding the Iraqi business people and contractors who could do the work He explains that even though anyone working with the Coalition, for example, even a teacher at a school being rebuilt by the Coalition, could be a target of the insurgents, there was nonetheless no difficulty recruiting people to serve as elected officials. What proved difficult, however, was explaining the concept of an official receiving a stipend to defray expenses, but not otherwise being paid for volunteer services. Many Iraqis felt the "stipend" was a salary, and the very existence of these stipends produced considerable demand for them. On balance, Bauer believes that he was successful in teaching council members what it means to be responsive to community needs, how to truly serve the community. Bauer felt that one of his most significant accomplishments was to communicate the idea of public service, in large measure by his own example.

Another important achievement in Bauer's view was his ability to get security training for these local officials. He cites the case of one gentleman whose security awareness saved his life. Bauer also provided his background knowledge to the task of making new buildings and schools safe from security threats.

Despite these real dangers, Bauer is highly critical of the U.S. media for focusing only on "what's getting blown up," rather than on what has been accomplished. For instance, he explained that the electrical grid was not set up to provide service to the 5 million inhabitants of Baghdad, but rather only to an elite (or those who paid bribes). When the Coalition made an effort to upgrade and share the resources, complaints came from those who no longer had privileged service. These were widely reported by the media, despite an overall improvement in electrical service to the general population. Bauer also disagrees with the media criticism of the "quota" system used to ensure that, for instance, there were women on the local councils. This was necessary, he believes, to ensure diversity.

Bauer also indicates how the Coalition failed to be sufficiently suspicious of the foreigners coming into the country, despite warnings from the Iraqis that they were up to no good. These individuals have now become ensconced in the country, and are creating real problems for the Coalition.

Bauer suggests that the ability to work cross-culturally and having good interpersonal and networking skills are essential for anyone hoping to work productively in Iraq. Bauer also believes that training in more than just religious sensitivity, rather, learning how Iraqis look at democracy, at the rest of the world, and understanding how they think could help communication tremendously.

In summing up, Bauer states that "99.9% "of the thousands of Iraqis he met were grateful and happy that "we did what we did" and were grateful for our presence and for deposing Saddam.

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

ERIC BAUER

Interviewed by: Barbara Nielsen
Initial interview date: October 21, 2004
Copyright 2004 ADST

Q: Today is October 21st. This is an interview with Eric Bauer 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. My name is Barbara Nielsen. Mr. Bauer, you were in Iraq from October of 2003 until April of 2004 and you had a very challenging assignment as governance officer and database manager. You were asked to help set up neighborhood, district and city councils in Baghdad and this involved interviewing people who hoped to become elected officials. What experience in your own professional background helped prepared you for this kind of assignment?

BAUER: I believe that working with the public and myself being half Navajo and growing up on an Indian reservation and then once being an adult going off reservation working with the diverse American community helped me to interact across different cultural boundaries, especially having worked in a non-profit where I was working with Native Americans who weren't financially sophisticated and then working with banks and lenders and government officials in D.C. to make sure that information and concerns were flowing both ways. That allowed me, when I was in Iraq, to express ideas, create analogies where you can explain concepts to the Iraqi people about democracy and freedom, and then take their concerns and initiatives back to the palace, when people were trying to understand what was going on in the streets and to work with two different cultures, two different types of world views or just the thought processes or a different way people approach life. So, I believe that was probably my best preparation for what I faced in Iraq.

Q: So, you were a good bridge between two cultures, obviously the American culture that dominated in the Green Zone and then the surrounding Iraqi culture, which was the rest of the city of Baghdad?

BAUER: Right, their understanding of freedom and how did that work, how did democracy work. We take so much for granted. We just don't realize that to us it just seems natural. To them it's definitely a foreign idea of: what does that mean, how does that play out?

Q: How was the work structured for you? Did you work with a team? Describe what would be a typical day for you.

BAUER: Like most people who went there, we had more than one thing to do. A typical day I would probably get up around 5:00, eat, and be in the office by 6:00. Some days I was managing to pay for the monthly stipends for elected officials. A big part of my mission program was to get the stipends out to the elected officials in an organized fashion, make sure we were paying the right people the right amount, all around Baghdad. If I had a mission to do that, I would be getting ready, getting the money, meeting the money people, making sure that my list of names was correct, heading out at about maybe 9:00 or 10:00. Making sure I've got translators. I always tried to have two translators, but organizing a crowd of maybe 100 people that are trying to collect pay and cross the language barrier. Insuring that we were paying the right person, that somebody wasn't showing up saying they were so and so—and they tried—but be back into the Green Zone by 3:00 or 4:00 and then doing some documentation on that. Probably doing some prep work to prioritize projects and what could be funded for community development. I might meet with some council members from a different part of the city, trying to train them as an elected representative of what money was available. How do you prioritize projects? What things in your community should be improved first to meet the needs of the people? They needed everything all at once, but money wasn't available for that. So how do you prioritize those things that your community needs as an elected official?

Q: Now, who were these elected officials you were paying? Were they left over from the Saddam regime?

BAUER: No, actually a big part of my job as a database manager was to interview all of the council members, especially at the higher levels, district and city and provincial council. We wanted to ensure that we did not have Baath party members or criminals trying to infiltrate the structure, especially higher-level Baath party members. Ferka level and above that had full knowledge of what Saddam was doing and were active participants in the dictatorship, so we had to ensure that those people were not getting into the process without being properly vetted. It was just some days that's what I would do. I would have appointments and reviews set up and people would come in and I would just interview them, get them to talk. Just over the course of two hours in a casual conversation, just getting people to talk about themselves, and then try to ensure quickly whether the timelines match up when they say this age, what date does that pertain to in their life and, while you're talking, you're writing down and seeing if their life, age and dates match up, where there's a continuous flow. But sometimes when people were overlapping or some just didn't seem right, you could from the history that I learned of the area just continue to get these people to talk about it. We had people confess that they were Baath party members and "Yes, I was over there, etc." We had a few people

that were arrested. We had one general who is probably going to go through war tribunals because of what he had done in the past. We had criminals pop up through this. So, just getting people to talk about themselves.

Q: These folks who were presenting themselves to you for interviews aspired to be elected officials. At what point were there going to be elections?

BAUER: There were always ongoing elections. Across Baghdad, just in the city part, you had 1,500 representatives. In the outer regions, we had another 400. What we tried to ensure is that it's one thing to be a neighborhood representative, but then when you start getting into the district level, that's a higher level. There are nine districts. Then you've got the city government and above that eventually a provincial government was created. We tried to ensure that the higher up people moved in influence and responsibility the cleaner they were—I mean without previous backgrounds. I would actually interview people two and three times even as they moved higher and higher up, always trying to ensure that their history was correct. [It was] a lot of documents. We had background documents that we were able to cross- reference activity to, but a lot of documents were destroyed by Saddam's people. Right at the end the intelligence department was just destroying stuff. We couldn't use a lot of that, but we did find a lot of stuff on who were Baath party members, etc. It was trying to determine who were the good guys and the bad guys.

Q: Okay, these were people who wanted to serve?

BAUER: These were people that usually had presented themselves to the military, the local military unit in the neighborhood, as somebody that wanted to serve. The military guys, anybody that wanted to be a part of it, okay, let's go with it. Good natured, real assuming at first.

Q: Assuming the best of people.

BAUER: Assuming the best of people, we'd do that and there had been some vetting at that level, sometimes good, sometimes adequate, sometimes not. Military intelligence had done a lot of vetting of the people for certain activities and we worked with them insuring what we had vetted and what they had vetted came out to be the same. A lot of my interviews were people who were already elected and we're just trying to ensure, especially when they wanted to go higher up in the councils. That's actually at the end when we started having more elections, I was actually vetting people before the election also, but that was the last couple of months of my time there. Because when I showed up, a lot of the councils had been formed already.

Q: They had been formed already?

BAUER: Yes, by October.

Q: By October, but these councils presumably were new to the Iraqis ?

BAUER: Yes.

Q: How were they constituted what was their mandate if you will?

BAUER: Look what we did in Baghdad is very similar to how they run the council system, from what I've heard, to Houston, Texas. 88 neighborhoods, nine districts and then you have a Sunni council, and so about approximately 1,500 neighborhoods. Out of the 88 neighborhoods there were about 1,500 elected representatives. That kept changing because we got better demographics of how many people lived in neighborhood, and even while we were there the population was continually shifting also.

Q: Sure.

BAUER: So, we were trying to get adequate representation to different neighborhoods and some neighborhoods were initially over-represented, so we had to cut back on those. But from there, I think it was about 230 people. They chose from their neighborhood representatives to represent them at the district level. The city was divided up into nine districts and there were about 230 people at the district level. Those people chose amongst themselves, I think it was 33 city council members. If you were a city council member, that meant you also were a district council member and a neighborhood council member.

Q: There were 33 city council members?

BAUER: Right. The only direct election was at the neighborhood level by the people in the populace, so you didn't have citywide campaigning or anything like that. They're not ready for that.

Q: No, that would have been quite an undertaking.

BAUER: Yes, so in a neighborhood there could be any number, but 10,000 people would choose a representative for their neighborhood. It varied the number of people per representative, maybe 800, but each group would choose their representatives and that's the person they stayed in contact with. It was the responsibility of the council members to stay in touch with what was happening in their neighborhood and in their district and at the city level, which is quite difficult of course. The higher up they rose, the higher their stipend reimbursement was, and by the time you're at the city level, it's pretty much a full-time job.

Q: Sure, and the people who had volunteered for this expected that, or were willing to spend the time.

BAUER: Yes. As time went on you could tell the people who were doing it out of a sense of community service and duty as opposed to the people who were doing it out of a desire in power and wealth. The people who were doing it out of community service usually held full-time jobs elsewhere, doctors and lawyers, and they continued with that practice and they did their community service duties on top of it. We had people that wanted, expected more stipend: "It's not enough pay." Well, this is community service. Just the idea of community service was new to them for a long time, for a lot of people.

Q: That's what I was wondering. How did you go about communicating these ideals and concepts that really take some first hand observation and a little bit of time to absorb them normally?

BAUER: Yes, you try to explain it several times, but I think the best impact was just explaining it as myself as a father. I'm doing it. What I've done in the past was because of my children and for them to serve as elected officials, you had to find the motivation, because it's definitely not for the pay and it's not for the prestige and the power in a democracy. It's not. It shouldn't be. But you do it out of the sense that you want a better life for your children and grandchildren. A lot of people understood that and they would shake their heads and go, "Okay, now I understand why they would do what they were doing."

Q: Then did that transfer to their understanding that you were a volunteer as well and there wasn't going to be a lot of personal aggrandizement coming out of your service, it was really a service that you were offering. Was that a harder concept for them to appreciate?

BAUER: I think it was. I think they knew we were being well paid and they thought that was the only motivation, but that wasn't my motivation. I mean that money has been spent. They found it interesting that I would quit my job. I would leave my family for six months and go over there and help them set up a democracy, and I think they really found that amazing. They found it interesting that most of our military guys were volunteer service and they were willing to go over there and get shot at, etc. By and large that was something hard for them to get their arms around and just to understand why would you do that with no remuneration out of it.

Q: It's a very hard concept I think. I've worked with international visitors to the U.S. quite a bit and one of the great surprises is the extent to which Americans volunteer to do all kinds of things that in most societies require that you pay someone or the government takes it on as a responsibility. It really is unique to our country and clearly the experience in Iraq was fundamentally based on the volunteer ethic of a great many people. It's a

wonderful lesson, which hopefully most of the people are in the position to observe and understand. You were living in the Green Zone and there had your office as well, but everyday you were out working directly with the populace and you were paying them or interviewing them. Were you involved in problem solving in which the council members would come to you because their neighborhood needed some service and they expected that you could help provide it? Was that part of your mandate?

BAUER: Yes, that would be part of the governance part, to help them determine what projects needed to be done, what was fundable, what was realistic. Putting in new electricity service to every house in their neighborhood, that just wasn't possible. But trying to make safe areas, safe electrically, we could try to work on that. Our biggest concerns were usually health related: sewage, clean water, medical attention, schools were a big priority. So, while a lot of people wanted the comfort upgrades, a lot of times we were trying to focus on what you had to have: safe clean living conditions first, and then we could work on the comfort upgrades.

Q: What was your team like, you were the only governance officer? Was anyone working with you?

BAUER: No. Our office was Baghdad Central and when I first got there we had 12 people in Baghdad Central and I think when I left it was close to 100. When I first got there, we had maybe two or three governance officers and when I left we had five, I believe. At first it was just you took care of the whole city and then we divided the districts up and eventually we had it down to where I was taking care of four districts and then two other people were taking care of the rest of the community and right when I left we had two more governance officers come in and so they divided up the city even more. That was the initial structure. Our office was comprised of contractors, State Department people, military officers, military enlisted. We had the whole gambit. We had Iraqi interpreters. We had Iraqi office help in the office also.

Q: What was the security situation for you at the time you were there? Did you have security when you traveled outside the Green Zone; you must have had some military escort, or how was the security for you?

BAUER: Most of the time when we'd travel out of the Green Zone, we would have escorts. We would be either in a Humvee, or we had a couple of Suburbans escorted by two Humvees front and back. Usually it was three Humvees going out, three or four, or when we felt that conditions were safe we would just go out in a couple of Suburbans and floor it to keep moving real fast. It's harder to hit a fast moving target, so we would just move real quickly. Usually when it was during the daytime on official business we would have escorts. Myself, I'm half Navajo, so I have brown skin, black hair, and I could dress down and I would go out with an interpreter and just get in a taxi and I would drive around with him. As long as I didn't speak English, it was fine and nobody questioned

what I was. I mean Iraq's very diverse in their population. Up North the Kurds are more European looking and there's a lot of immigrants from a variety of places. Especially in Baghdad, the city is very diverse. I would go to the restaurants and shopping in the markets in the city and I never got a second look. We had to assume the walk of an Iraqi man. You had to change the way you behaved to fit into the environment, but I think I had a lot of advantages because I could go out more and it was less restrictive. A lot of people sometimes got escorts, sometimes they didn't so their meetings got pushed off. I could go out in taxis or in local cars either my interpreters had or we had. Eventually we had one to use in our office, but that gave me a big advantage to work real closely with people.

Q: Right, were you able to visit Iraqis informally?

BAUER: Yes. We went to houses on weekends and picnics. We'd go there for an evening meal so I did get to visit quite a few people in their houses and enjoyed a few weekends on the river.

Q: I imagine today that really isn't a possibility.

BAUER: I think it would be more difficult today, yes.

Q: But at that time the attitude of the Iraqis was apparently fairy positive across the board; at least you found enough people that you could visit and they were willing to be friendly to you.

BAUER: When I was there, across the board everybody was appreciative for what we had done, very grateful, very satisfied with us being there. Towards the end they were disgruntled that we had not take care of the foreigner situation.

Q: They realized there were a lot of foreigners in their city?

BAUER: Yes, they knew that there were bad guys coming in from other countries, Yemen, Syria, Iran and what I kept hearing was: "We told the military and they're not doing anything about these guys." Well, it might be because they hadn't done anything yet. They're just foreigners here. They haven't done anything yet so the military can't "take care of the person." That's what I started hearing a lot in the end: "We've got these foreigners and we need to take care of them." And unfortunately, I think the Iraqi police weren't up to that.

Q: Weren't up to that.

BAUER: Weren't up to the task and, we being a trusting group of people, Americans being heavily politically correct, we didn't want to deal heavily with somebody just

because they were a foreigner.

Q: I guess we didn't have either sufficient troops, or it wasn't part of the plan to be stationing our forces at the border? It's a long border I guess?

BAUER: Yes, we don't have enough to do that here in the United States.

Q: We certainly can't do it here in the United States.

BAUER: It's wide open.

Q: It was never part of the plan to make sure that people didn't come in from Syria and Jordan.

BAUER: Well, how do you do that? How do you station one person every 100 yards?

Q: I don't know how you would do it.

BAUER: How would you do a change shift every eight hours? I've lived in wide-open spaces out West and people just don't realize how.

Q: How difficult it would be, yes.

BAUER: How easy it would be to penetrate the wide-open space especially when you've got mountainous terrains and there are gullies and ravines.

Q: Usually there's a history of back and forth trade and commerce and people have for centuries been transiting those areas.

BAUER: Yes, the black market under Saddam was alive and well. I mean the Baath party supposedly controlled everything, but people had to live and survive and those boundaries were well known where they were poorest to bring in food and supplies to people that were out of favor with Saddam. Those people still had to survive and there was a healthy black market before and probably many of those same routes were utilized to smuggle in weapons and terrorists and insurgents into the country.

Q: Yes, I read recently that the markets in Baghdad were very well supplied with fresh fruits and vegetables and of course a lot of non-perishable items including weapons and fancy cars that had managed to find their way without any trouble into Iraq. I don't know that we were trying to control the ingress of fresh bananas, but apparently such produce was readily available and I guess even reasonably cheap by our standards.

BAUER: Oh, yes. Before the invasion and even after you could readily acquire things.

I think after what you saw more of was cars, a lot of European cars with European license plates on them. So I imagine it's the new hot market for stolen cars from Europe. A lot of cars were brought in. People told me before that yes, the markets were like this, we could get pretty much everything we needed. You could bribe officials as long as you had some money to bribe the official; you could get what you wanted.

Q: We won't discuss the oil for food program in particular unless you were involved in it.

BAUER: I wasn't in that, no, I'm talking about just the ability. What amazed me as I was interviewing people was the ability that people had to leave the country, come in and out of the country to go to school, to get out of military service, to do business in other countries. I would ask them, " How did you do that when there was a dictatorship and you're not a Baath party member?" They'd say, "Oh, it's just a bribe." If you paid enough you could do pretty much anything you wanted. The officials were very corrupt all the way up and down the ladder. Their loyalty was for sale. They could turn a blind eye to just about anything and they would stamp passports and all that. These people were just doing business.

Q: If you had the funds you could do what you needed to do and I guess it does suggest that there were not that many deeply committed to the ideology of the Baath party.

BAUER: They were committed as long as they were taken care of. There were a few that were brutal about it, but for a lot of them it was a way to get by. If you didn't have a moral conscience you would do it. Like I said, they weren't loyal to the principles of it.

Q: Okay. Going back to some of the priority projects, what were some of the projects that you undertook with your teammates that you felt were high priority, and how did they play out?

BAUER: A lot of times we would help prioritize things and hand them off to another group that specialized once we had a viable project. One priority was just bringing all the people to the table and once a community decided "okay, we're going to do this, this and this", we would provide money for this and this. We'd bring the two people together and watch it happen and solve problems if there were any. Schools, getting the schools refurbished. That was a big priority for everybody and getting people back to being educated, especially the young girls. We had people in our office, one lady especially, who was working on women's issues, getting shelters made up for them.

Q: Shelters for?

BAUER: Battered women.

Q: Battered women.

BAUER: Abused women.

Q: The family structure would not provide them some assistance?

BAUER: Sometimes it would, but we saw how Saddam decimated families, especially the Shiites. He just killed wholesale family groups.

Q: The breadwinners.

BAUER: The breadwinners, yes. The men were sent into war or used for experiments. So he would physically disable them. There may not have been anywhere for them to go home to anymore. There was no family left to fall back on. Help was needed for them. They had no education. They had no job skills. There was a need for education and job skills training and just for help at the most basic level for a lot of people, for a lot of women and children. There was abuse, how to handle that, especially within the Muslim culture. A couple of people that were working on that just couldn't understand how a man had all the legal rights to do what he was doing.

Q: That's true.

BAUER: So, I didn't get heavily involved with that, but I saw them working on those issues trying to get international non-profits in there to help out and I know they were doing a lot of things in that area.

Q: Education, for example, you mentioned was one of the big fields of activity. The effort to reopen schools and I guess refurbish schools was undertaken by the coalition troops ?

BAUER: A lot of the manpower was provided by the troops themselves. The regular army and reservists obviously, but I mean the regular trooper was just enthusiastic to get in there and help clean up the schools, refurbish them. While I was there we were hiring Iraqi business people, contractors, subcontractors, to come in and do work, and so that started to be done. We sometimes played a role of arbitrator between the quality of work and the payment and all of that when there were unscrupulous business people.

Q: Were they often Iraqi companies then that would work directly on these projects? You hear often of the big American companies that had these contracts, but at the level of building schools in Baghdad, was the work done primarily by Iraqi companies or American companies?

BAUER: The longer I was there, the more you saw the work being done by the Iraqi companies. People saw opportunities to be in business and they took advantage of that and got into business. A lot of them were being taught how to be businessmen. At first I

think it was a lot of the Americans doing it, there was just nobody there. You just didn't have the Yellow Pages to find the local roofer and the glass man and the plumber just didn't exist at a formal level. It was just at an underground level. The longer I was there, the easier it was to find people to do plumbing, to do electrical, to do a lot of those trade skills.

Q: So, you definitely saw in the six months that you were there a lot of progress ?

BAUER: Oh, yes. I'd say it wasn't just these big companies doing the work. They would facilitate the work. They would ensure the work was being done. There was some quality to it, but there's not the vast army of American electricians and plumbers and carpenters over there doing the actual work. You would see people with supervising skills, management skills going in. You might see a foreman with ten guys that say they can pound a nail and he would be making sure they can actually pound the nails in the right place. Towards the end, one of the things that I was doing was to get a meeting place for one district for their councils, for the government. Basically a city hall is what we called it, a district hall. We had to acquire a building that used to be owned by the Baath party and renovate it, kick out the squatters. There were groups trying to use the building for their own means and we determined that they weren't a legitimate NGO.

Q: How did you get rid of them?

BAUER: I went and talked to them once, formal notice. You are not a legitimate owner of this building. They were trying to refurbish it into the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution, I think, and they were basically setting up a sweatshop for women that were going to do seamstress work. Then they had apartments. They were converting what used to be a building into some apartments for managers to live in, but we got in there and told them they had to leave and after a couple of visits, they understood that I was serious. Of course they contested this and we went through the usual channels of legitimacy. We even offered, "If you're truly a legitimate NGO and you meet community standards for community good, we'll help you get set up." They really didn't want that. They wanted a blank slate to do whatever they wanted to do, which was not good stuff. We knew that. We tried to steer them in the right direction to do something that was good. They chose not to and they moved on. We went in and refurbished the building and made it suitable for holding city functions and having meetings and offices and just a regular government office building, city hall type place. That was one of the things I was directly involved in, finding contracts for that. Setting up security for it, making sure it was a secure site a safe place to work against car bombs and stuff like that. I got involved in security things.

Q: Yes, amazing.

BAUER: Things like that. I mean you would look at how do you secure a school and

make sure it's safe.

Q: Could you tell a little bit about how you dealt with that kind of a problem. I mean here's the school and I guess you have brought resources to be able to reopen it and it's all ready to go, but how did you deal with security and hiring the teachers?

BAUER: I didn't have to be involved in hiring teachers, but I had gone through a lot of security training with Diplomatic Security. I had actually arranged for training from them for the elective officials on how to stay alive.

Q: Very good, yes.

BAUER: I saw that as a need because they offered that training to us within the Green Zone and the palace. I went through the classes. This is what our elected officials need because [there were] several assassinated and kidnapped and threatened. I set up the training for them and sitting through that course several times and talking to D.S. personnel, I learned a lot about security and used that knowledge when we were setting up buildings for various purposes and you could see where there were security lapses or better ways to ensure that we had a secure site. So, we would ensure that the placement of barriers, the improvements for the access to the building would be such that it would be a safer place for people to work out of.

Q: These elected officials that now needed to take measures for their personal security, how involved could they get in that? I doubt that the military could provide security details for all the elected officials. So, what kinds of measures could they realistically take for protection?

BAUER: Well, we had people who, because of our training, realized they were under surveillance and we did take measures to find out who was observing them and we did catch a couple of guys who were intent upon killing them. We did that. We provided weapons, small handguns for some of the higher elected officials.

Q: These were individuals who had some experience with weapons?

BAUER: I think everybody in Iraq [does]. A five year old gets an AK as a gift.

Q: So, that wasn't an issue?

BAUER: That was not an issue. They all were familiar with weapons.

Q: Amazingly.

BAUER: They didn't have hang-ups with that. Actually a lot of the elected officials

were requesting weapons cards because, as we had asked when we first came in, they had turned in their weapons. Well, now they were elected officials; they were a target. They didn't have a weapon and of course, as usual, the criminal has the weapon and he comes knocking on the door and the man or woman would have no way to defend themselves or their families. If they could answer the door and have a weapon handy late at night, 10:00, 11:00 or something when somebody would knock on the door they would have the ability to defend themselves. One gentleman directly because of the D.S. training, every morning he walked around his car and checked for explosives. One morning he did find a bomb under his car and it had probably been two months since he had had the training and so they defused it. It was a legitimate bomb and because of that he is alive today. That made me feel pretty good. Made our whole office feel good.

Q: Yes, definitely, wow.

BAUER: He was a city council member.

Q: In a war situation even the relatively minor officials are still targets, apparently?

BAUER: Oh, yes. Pretty much everybody that was involved, I mean, in any way involved with the coalition. If you benefited from the activities of the coalition, if you were a schoolteacher, if you were a vendor that sold supplies to the schools, the hospitals or to provide food to the hospitals, or anything, just in contact with the activities of the coalition, you were a legitimate target to the insurgents, to the terrorists, to the rebellion. They just didn't care who you were, even if you were Iraqi and you were a teacher or you were a utility worker, they just saw you as being a legitimate target.

Q: Now, it sounds as if when you first got there you had lots of people who wanted to have these positions of elected officials. As things became more dangerous for them, was there a perceptible shift in the ability to recruit people to serve?

BAUER: Not during the time I was there. We never had a problem filling positions. There were always people wanting to serve. In fact we almost had a problem of almost too many people wanting to serve.

Q: Too many people?

BAUER: In fact, the understanding of what a stipend was created the impression that they had a job then and it's not. They thought it was pay for being on the council for workers in the neighborhood and that concept of the difference between a paycheck or an employee getting a stipend was a different concept and it sometimes created more difficulty than it was worth I think.

Q: Because the stipend was designed to do what, defray some costs?

BAUER: Defray the cost away from work and expenses: having to make copies or have a phone or just to travel back and forth. Especially when you're district or city council level, you're doing a lot more traveling.

Q: Presumably the level would have been sufficiently minimal that they would see that this stipend clearly doesn't compensate them for their efforts, but it helps them be able to do it because they don't have to pay for the photocopies or the phone calls.

BAUER: Right, especially for gas and phone calls, yes. It was more than sufficient for their activities and what they were doing. It was definitely higher than anything I ever had when I was an elected official. It was interesting because then people assume that okay, if I go to the council, if I go to the neighborhood meetings, then I'm eligible for a stipend because the neighborhood council would form a local committee and there were various committees formed in a neighborhood to address different issues. And so people would assume that "oh, now I should be eligible for a stipend also."

Q: So, then you generated lots of demand for your stipends?

BAUER: Yes, yes, we did. That became a headache sometimes. Just to make them understand, "No, you're doing this for the good of your community and only the elected council member gets the stipend, not only because you go to the same number of meetings that he does and you're on a committee does not make you eligible for a stipend." To get them to understand that once you have a free government, maybe that's something you want. It's not what we're going to be doing. Just because you show up to a council meeting doesn't mean you get to have money.

Q: Yes, that's a subtle point, but an important one. You alluded earlier to the Baath party membership of some other people that you had to interview and that those who were at the Ferka level I think you said, or above, would be disqualified. Can you explain what that level is and how you would be able to determine the level within the party that people had reached?

BAUER: Usually, I mean everybody. Supposedly everybody was a Baath party member.

Q: Right, you just signed up.

BAUER: You didn't even have to sign up. You were born, okay; you're a member of the Baath party. There were levels of activity or service in the higher up, I mean if you wanted a job that was, let's say a teacher or a doctor within the government, well they controlled pretty much everything, but if you wanted to rise in rank in the military as a sergeant, both sergeant or higher officer level, you would have to take this allegiance at a

higher level and you became instead of just a . . .

Q: Just a registered member?

BAUER: A registered member. You would take active part in furthering the goals of the Baath party, or at least swear allegiance to them now. Does that mean people actually did that, because technically then we would have to dismiss all schoolteachers.

Q: I think at a point that was done and then they had to get them back on the rolls.

BAUER: Right. All doctors and all lawyers and all business people, all military, you know. I mean that became a great difficulty because coming from the outside going in and us not having the intelligence in that area beforehand, we had to then make a determination after we were there of how do you decide who is a good guy and who is a bad guy. I mean you could have people that were at the Ferka level or even higher, and were they good guys or were they bad guys? Were they doing this? I mean some people were forced to do it. I mean if you were a very good teacher and you became a principal, you were forced to sign on the line otherwise you were not going to be and then it became: how do I provide for my family?

Q: I guess there would be some penalty too if you were a little bit reluctant to extend to this level.

BAUER: Sure, I mean, I can't remember exact dollar amounts, but if you were in the military as a sergeant you might get 750 dinar a month, but if you were a Baath party member you'd get a million dinars a month.

Q: Oh, wow, a tremendous difference.

BAUER: A tremendous difference, and you would hold the same job. Same with schoolteachers, same with every profession, there were incentives to be a Baath party member and it directly translated into the ability to take care of yourself and your family. That was the hard part for us to determine who was doing these activities, who joined and what were you doing. Was it out of loyalty to the goals of the party or just out of providing for your family? Was this is a good person or a bad person? What was their motivation? That's where you had to have the one on one interviews and just talk.

Q: How much information did the people you were meeting have about the United States in general? They didn't know a lot about democracy I guess and most of them presumably weren't extremely well traveled or Western educated, but did they have some sophistication about either life in the U.S. or the way our society functioned?

BAUER: There would be very different answers from two different groups. If you had

the educated people who had the ability to leave the country and get educated, they were fairly knowledgeable about America. Maybe not the intricacies, but they understood what we were about and had some understanding of our ways of life. Some people had family members who had left the country and they had been able to stay in contact and knew how great we have it here. Then there was, shall we say, the general masses; they didn't have any understanding and it was quite surprising to them how we were, that we were not as we had been portrayed, brutal, minions of Satan out there doing Satan's bidding. So, I think that was a real eye opener for some of them that there was such a big difference. I took advantage of the fact that I was Native American during my introduction to them. I mentioned that and talked about it and so that created a real curiosity for them to want to talk to me more, to learn about that because they hadn't had any exposure to that part of life.

Q: Did they have the usual idea that the Native Americans have been oppressed by the majority, and you could make the case for that?

BAUER: They didn't have the oppression part, but they definitely had the Dances With Wolves, Hollywood version of Native Americanhood. Actually, most Americans have that too, surprisingly.

Q: When you come back to it, it is unusual even in a cosmopolitan place like Washington to meet a Native American.

BAUER: Yes. I had to use the same answers for the Iraqi people that I use in Washington, D.C. to explain to the guys. They've never been out West, they've never seen the Native Americans, never seen the culture, the reservations. They don't understand. I was used to explaining that to them.

Q: That's good that they had this real privilege, not only to meet Americans, but to meet Native Americans and to disabuse themselves of some misperceptions.

BAUER: That reminds me, one of the important things for me in speaking cross culturally to a group is to value the relationship. They wanted to know who the person was that they were talking to. In America we hand a business card to each other. In America our job defines who we are, what school did you go to, you know? Our résumé. I could tell you, Native Americans do not relate to each other on that level, and the Iraqi people do not relate to each other on that level. That was incidental. That didn't define who you were. When I took the time to explain: here's who I am, here's where I come from, here's my mother, here's my father, here's my grandparents, here's my wife, my children, here's my goals, my aspirations, here's my religion, here's my beliefs, here's how I feel about this subject, that subject, then they would open wide up. There was a relationship there then. They knew who I was as a person and vice versa. They would explain that to me too. That's when you could talk to somebody and they would just be

wide open to you.

Q: You hear a lot about the importance of clan in Iraq and part of what defines them as individuals is defined by the ethnic group they come from.

BAUER: Yes, and the same with Native Americans. I'm bitter water clan, and so they understood that.

Q: Yes, that's foreign to the rest of us, I guess.

BAUER: But it's not, if you're Irish, you have clans, Scottish cultures.
You look at where people are from, European descent and then you have those family groupings that used to be very strong and used to be stereotyped about how different family groups were and how those O'Malleys were, and all of that.

Q: Well, it was not so long ago that that was important, but I would say in the last 50 years probably we haven't seen it.

BAUER: Yes, as we became a mobile culture.

Q: Yes, we have our nuclear families, but it takes a lot of work to maintain the extended family.

BAUER: Yes, the extended family, the intergenerational family is gone and you lose that family identity.

Q: Yes, but clearly the Iraqis would have those ties and they would be important.

BAUER: Yes.

Q: Again, when you were working at the councils, presumably there were a variety of backgrounds represented. Did that bubble up naturally or did you have to engineer in some fashion to get a wide representation of different groups?

BAUER: We carefully structured the councils to ensure that there was diversity in the representation because otherwise there would not have been. Left to its own devices there would have been no women; depending on the neighborhood they all would have been 40 to 50 year old Shiite men or Sunni men. That would have been it, or they would have all been from one family, a large family group dominating different sections of the city. People say, "Well, that's not a democracy." No, it's a republic trying to get fair representation, not just mob rule. We want it to have diversity of ideas and that for the most part it would work and there were still a lot of prejudices that were brought to the table, dismissive attitudes of each other sometimes, but we would try to ensure that the

diversity of the needs of the community were brought to the table. Yes, sometimes we stepped in and said, no, you're not going to do that, you're going to do this, period, because it's the right thing to do. It may not benefit your family or it may not benefit your group, but you have to have….

Q: Some balance?

BAUER: Some balance and maybe you haven't learned those lessons yet, but this is the right thing to do. So, we would tell people and we got criticized for doing that. While I was there I was reading the American papers on the Internet of what was being said about this and it's just not realistic to assume that everything in life is fair. It's not written down there.

Q: I'm surprised that the American press would be critical particularly. I could see the Iraqi press, to the extent there was any, as more likely to criticize.

BAUER: That wasn't a really big problem in the Iraqi press, especially at first. There wasn't a lot.

Q: There really wasn't much.

BAUER: Right. Towards the last three months I was there, there was definitely an explosion of Iraqi press, but the American media was very critical. Oh, are these really elected officials? How did they get elected and if they were elected, how did you get a woman on there, you know? That wasn't the point. You would say, we told them they were going to have three women on this council because the majority of the people in the community are women and they were going to have a Sunni and a Shiite and Kurd and an Assyrian and yes, this is how your council needed to be structured because otherwise it would have been whoever was dominant in that neighborhood.

Q: Now, you personally had to make some of these determinations for the city councils?

BAUER: Yes, well, not city, but neighborhood. We started at that level.

Q: In your neighborhood.

BAUER: And the districts.

Q: And the districts and the necessary Solomonic assignment really keeps you up at night trying to decide, how many and what kind?

BAUER: I would be up late at night talking about how the councils should be properly structured to ensure diversity.

Q: You worked a lot with the military obviously and you have some military background yourself?

BAUER: Yes.

Q: You were in the air force as a specialist dealing with chemical, biological, and nuclear equipment. Was that experience directly or indirectly helpful to you in your work in Iraq?

BAUER: I think that involvement with logistics during my time in the service, (I also was an electronic warfare systems technician, but towards the end I was doing the NBC stuff) and I think that experience is what got me into Iraq, gave me the go ahead from the Department of Defense. Okay, you know how to work within a military environment. That got me through the door. Fortunately I didn't have to use any of that experience, but I had that knowledge if anything occurred that I would know what to do in those environments and that was a real concern when we went over there.

Q: That's right, you can forget that now because it proved not to be a problem, but . . .

BAUER: He was very good at hiding stuff. I interviewed people and we turned them over to security. I interviewed people that said they were part of it; they knew where stuff used to be. They really did have it. It's gone now, but it was there. It was there.

Q: Sure and who knows if all of it was gone.

BAUER: Stuff got buried and nobody knows where and stuff got taken over the border. It's just hearsay now, that's secondhand information. It was here, I'm telling you six months ago it was right here.

Q: As recently as that?

BAUER: Yes, but that's not something you can take to court.

Q: Your working group: there were military folks in it?

BAUER: Yes, we didn't work like a team per se. I mean we all didn't collaborate with each other. We all had different objectives.

Q: You were just cooperating with the military as you needed to.

BAUER: If we had 100 people in our office like we had been originally staffed to, then we would have had little teams, but usually we had one person doing three jobs.

Q: What were you able to do with the criminals that you identified in your interviews?

BAUER: We would turn them over to security for investigation. Some people were arrested and we found bad guys even within the council that had gotten in before and were blackmailing, were extorting for personal gain. They were arrested and we had a couple of guys who actually went to jail. They were tried by the Iraqi court system and they were put in jail.

Q: I don't think that people realize that the Iraqi court system was able to function during this time.

BAUER: It never really stopped functioning. When I showed up there it was functioning.

Q: The Iraqi courts are based on a civil law code I suppose?

BAUER: Yes, they have their own code. It's not religion. It's not Sharia law, it's a regular. . .

Q: European style court system?

BAUER: European style court system. Yes.

Q: So, it was working and some of these folks that were tried and found guilty got to Abu Ghraib do you think?

BAUER: No, I don't know where they ended up, but they were in prison and they were being held. Yes. We had guys go in there for extortion, especially at the political level I think just for the abuse of power for financial gain. What's the word?

Q: Extortion?

BAUER: Yes. Financial, I can't think of the word.

Q: Malfeasance.

BAUER: Yes. Accounting type issues. Misuse of funds.

Q: Okay, now you had to just have the suspicion that someone was involved in criminal activity and you could turn it over to security to investigate.

BAUER: Right.

Q: I'm really awed by all the things that you were trying to do at one time and in only six months.

BAUER: You don't sleep. The first group of guys I worked with, we were doing 16 to 20 hours a day seven days a week, everybody.

Q: You can do that only for a certain amount of time.

BAUER: After two months we got half a day off on Friday. On Friday we could come in late on Friday morning and then after two more months we got all day Friday off, but mostly showed back up on Friday because what are you going to do? There's nothing to do. It sounds horrendous, but it really isn't. I mean like you said, you're running on adrenaline, you're just pumped up. You're very focused on the mission. Sometimes I was tired, but surprisingly I wasn't. You're wound up; you're just on the edge for that period of time. If you're sold on the mission, you can do that. When I came home it took me four months to unwind basically.

Q: Right, and were you extremely tired or still maybe operating on adrenalin?

BAUER: When I first came home I was fortunate because our plane broke down when we left Baghdad and we needed a part from Germany, so we were in Kuwait City for three or four days. Just unwinding there my family didn't have to go through that decompressing. We were all surprised. It was surprising to us just how that felt to unwind. I didn't have to put my family through that, but when I got home I slept a lot for the first week, more than I ever slept before. I didn't want to go back to work right away and fortunately the money provided the ability for me to take time off to be with the family and then we went on vacation and came back from vacation after about three and a half weeks. I felt like okay, now I'm ready to get a job. Went looking for a job and found one.

Q: Where are you now?

BAUER: I'm working for Consolidated Engineering Services as a project superintendent on a construction project. I oversee seven subcontractors.

Q: Does it have anything to do with Iraq?

BAUER: I've been a general foreman as an electrician, but never anything like this. It's interesting work.

Q: Yes, anything to do with construction these days is big business. So, there's plenty of work.

BAUER: Yes, this opens up a whole new field and another thing to add to the résumé.

Q: Yes. Let me ask about funding for the many activities you were doing. You alluded to the fact that money was going to be spent giving stipends and doing the refurbishing work in schools and so on. For your work, was money ever an issue? Did you have the resources you needed?

BAUER: Yes, we had the resources. I mean money wasn't an issue. Could we have used more money for certain projects? Sure, but the hardest part was keeping track of who had money. I mean, between what we had, then you had all the NGOs, what projects they wanted to fund, and then just the monitoring of the money. There was just no system, governmental system in place that you could just rely upon. So, every group that was providing funding was just providing money and was sometimes sketchy as to how the funds were being managed in their disbursement and use.

Q: Some of your assignment was to also keep track of the funding?

BAUER: Some of us did that, yes. There were people within Baghdad Central that did that.

Q: I'm sure there were accountants that went over the money.

BAUER: Yes, especially with our money. I mean we had federal dollars that had to be accounted for. So, our money was well managed, but I could see where the NGOs and other groups, other donors, international donors, there wasn't that structure; you didn't have the government to monitor those structures. You don't have a formal Iraqi non-profit checks and balances. There's no IRS to ensure that the local school non-profit is handling the money correctly, and we knew of cases where money was not used properly. Was there any system in place to even monitor that? Not at this point, not when you're talking a whole new representative. They didn't have an IRS to pursue tax fraud. They didn't have non-profits. There's no code. There's no place they could go get a grand jury if somebody abuses non-profit money.

Q: The money that you used was U.S. funding as opposed to frozen Iraqi funds also.

BAUER: We would use some of that, yes. Especially at first, I think we used a lot of that for various things. Of course within Baghdad Central we had people that monitored that money. My job was to know what money was available for what type of work and then marry that to the needs of the neighborhoods.

Q: Okay, did you have some health care projects as well? I think you may have mentioned something.

BAUER: I wasn't involved directly in that. There was somebody that more or less specialized in health care issues, but I got to see where the offices were needed. We needed a clinic and if the neighborhood brought a concern of needing more health care, or this hospital is way far away, or we don't have transportation over there to bring that to the attention of the health care people. This neighborhood has this concern and just make sure it's on their radar screen because the people who specialized in certain projects, they had the ability, but not like what I had to go out. And I was meeting at least almost every day with some different neighborhood group, maybe twice a day even. I'd go to two different neighborhoods to meet with them and help see what was an issue in this neighborhood and take that back.

Q: Someone was with you in the same job?

BAUER: Yes, two people replaced me.

Q: You were replaced by two people?

BAUER: Actually three. It was two governance officers and a database manager.

Q: Yes, we haven't talked about your database yet, so tell us what it was and how it served your mission here.

BAUER: I got pulled into that.

Q: That wasn't your original task?

BAUER: That wasn't my original task. My original task was being governance officer and then they pointed out that we need to keep track of those elected officials and we got this database that was created by a couple of young kids, army guys, who knew Access. Well, they knew enough to be dangerous. They created the ability to put information in and it worked very fine. The problem was, you couldn't get information out of it and that was probably because we didn't know ahead of time how you wanted the information to look on the way out. With Access you've got to know ahead of time what you want out of it. I think that was an evolving thing. What do you want coming out? The initial database was designed so that it couldn't give you the information out structured in a different variety of formats and breakdowns. We wanted to know how many women and men and age groups and just like census information, demographics. I determined that it was broke. I had to break the news to everybody. They didn't like that news. They had to spend a couple of months building this thing. I had to hurt one guy's feelings, but he was leaving anyway. He was cycling out, but I broke the news and promptly went about figuring out what we wanted out of the database and it was a big project. I realized this was going to take a couple of months to build a new database. We

hired a young Iraqi kid who had his Master's in Computer Science from Baghdad University and this was his first job. He demonstrated to me that he knew how to program in Access and he understood what I was looking for. He worked there for I think four or five months and now he works at a different embassy in Iraq near his house. That was his job and I was his boss and he was very energetic and built the database for us.

Q: How did you recruit him or find him? Just from someone suggesting him?

BAUER: Just put the word out to the Iraqi people, to the interpreters and just network and let them know I'm looking for an Iraqi to do some programming. I need somebody that's got a Master's in computer programming that knows Access.

Q: You'd check that they knew English as well, I suppose.

BAUER: A lot of them know English.

Q: A lot of them would know English if they've studied something like technology and science.

BAUER: The old joke, you've heard it: Americans know one language. Who are you if you know four languages? You're Asian. If you know three languages, you're Middle Eastern. If you know two languages, you're European. If you know one language, you're American.

Q: I've never heard that actually, but it's true.

BAUER: Yes, because a lot of our interpreters would know English, Arabic, French, German or Russian, a couple other Middle Eastern languages, and they would know English. They were very much multilingual. He knew German and English and Arabic.

Q: He'd only studied in Iraq?

BAUER: Yes.

Q: Today he's working for?

BAUER: Another embassy within the Coalition. He's working for another embassy; it's just closer to his house, that's all.

Q: Because these folks have to pass through a lot of checkpoints to get into work everyday?

BAUER: Yes, that was a real hassle. He was young. He was just out of college. His

mother worried about him continually. His mom would call him all the time at work. If there was an explosion anywhere in town, she would be calling him. You'd pick up the phone and okay, hang up, "It's your mom." It was the standing joke.

Q: It was probably safer there than with his mother out in the city center.

BAUER: Yes and no. They all thought if you'd go to Baltimore, you'd die. I mean you watch our news and you think if you go to any major city you're going to die. All they focus, all our media focus on, is what has been blown up today. I mean by and large though that was not the overriding fact to arise there.

Q: But something did change I guess. We were sort of oblivious as late as when you left last April.

BAUER: I think we were politically correct. We didn't want to assume that these foreigners that were coming into the country were bad guys. They probably had their weapons hidden, their money hidden, and so when our guys would go there and knock on the door, there was nothing in the house. "We're just here to work. I'm a carpenter, I'm a plumber, I'm here to work. There's no work at home, so I'm here to work. You guys have a job. " Our guys just assumed the best and we didn't want to offend anybody.

Q: Right.

BAUER: If somebody says they're on a religious pilgrimage to this mosque. No, you're here to get weapons at the mosque. You're not here to do this. So, we don't want to offend anybody and now they're ensconced into the country.

Q: Well, was Sadr City part of your territory?

BAUER: Yes.

Q: What experiences did you have in Sadr City? Were you able to visit there?

BAUER: At the time I freely moved about Sadr City. No problems. In fact, during my time there it was much easier to move around just in a taxi or a personal vehicle because we knew that when you were in a Suburban, that was the big giveaway right there.

Q: Well, sure

BAUER: Nobody else but Americans were in Suburbans. I mean so you might as well paint a big target at what's going to be shot at today. Even potshots were they knew who to shoot at because of the vehicles you were driving. They didn't fit in.

Q: Well, when you went to a place like Sadr City, what was your objective? Did you have an appointment there to speak with some local leaders?

BAUER: Work with the council. Just look at projects, look at schools, look at a possible facility for a clinic and look at a school that needed refurbishing, determine how much refurbishing. They would want a really nice building; we'd say, what's usable? Get what's minimally necessary to put a class in. We'll put windows in and we'll make sure the roof doesn't leak, but the kids have a desk and some lighting and the bathrooms are functional, but not everything is going to have nice window shades.

Q: Was the equipment needed readily available in the country, or did you have to bring it in?

BAUER: Yes, when I first got there it was mostly brought in from outside of the country. Towards the end the Iraqis had set up business to be vendors for that stuff and they were bringing the stuff in from countries so we could go to an Iraqi person. If you wanted a desk, this guy provided office supplies.

Q: Were you the procurement officer as well, and you'd go tell them, " We're going to need 1,000 desks?"

BAUER: Yes, we would make those determinations, worked with the council. A lot of what we did was we wanted to teach somebody else how to do this. It would be of no use if I went there for six months and I did everything myself.

Q: Well, you really couldn't anyway.

BAUER: Yes, when you walk away, there's no knowledge left, so you're working really hand-in-hand, and you're trying to be a trainer or a teacher. You showed them how to do this themselves. That was the whole point of it all. That's why we're there, to show them how to do it themselves and that's what we did.

Q: So, when you evaluate now, what do you think are your most memorable successes? What are you most proud of that you were able to do? I can think of a lot of things.

BAUER: Kept some people alive. I think that was very satisfying, being able to pick up on some training that was needed and people used it and they were alive. I think meeting some people, making some friends that I still communicate with on the Internet. I hope some day to meet again.

Q: Telling you how things are going in the sector that they're working in?

BAUER: Yes, concerns and issues.

Q: What do they say? Daily life, and if it's a councilperson who is able to fill you in, are they continuing the work that was begun?

BAUER: Yes, people are still doing the work. I'm not really involved in the nuances of the personal issues, but you know, there are still people, the same people are still representatives, people that are interpreting are the same. I called an old friend. He wants to go to Germany to continue his studies or get a job over there. He moved over there and this guy's mom is sick, so I get a request to pray for her and things like that. Personal friendships.

Q: It's really important though that life is continuing and that the train that was put in motion hasn't screeched to a halt and that's not a story that's well advertised or well known.

BAUER: No. None of the good stories were publicized to the American public and that was real frustrating. The good stories were ignored by our media. We would set up press events. We would put media packages together, press kits. We would bring people that have success stories, neighborhoods that would have success stories, councils that would have success stories and the media would show up. We'd do a presentation and none of it would show up in the paper and the only thing they would do afterwards was to try to find people that would say bad things about the situation. Oh, the Americans didn't provide you enough money for this problem and didn't solve this issue or people have been killed in your community, what do you think about that?

Q: Good news is never what sells.

BAUER: When we started, you would hear all the bad news about sewage and electricity, especially at first when I got there. All the infrastructure was falling apart and somehow it was America's problem. We did it, which is a joke, because as somebody with a utility background, I know what I'm looking at when I see infrastructure. It was amazing this stuff even worked. It was 30-year-old technology and it was all French and German, but it was antiquated and it was amazing it worked, especially the electrical.

Q: We keep reading that we have to keep repairing damage that was caused by the sabotage.

BAUER: That wasn't even the biggest problem. The sabotage was one problem, but it was the fact the system was not set up to deliver electricity to five million people. It was set up to deliver electricity to maybe two million people on a rotating basis depending upon who was in favor of Saddam at that moment. The system there was of electricity and water. The system was never intended to supply that much service, so it would overload the system and then the system would burn out, or the water system, there was

hardly any water pressure left. A lot of what we were doing was upgrading the systems to meet the new demands of people that were now eligible for service. Before there were only limited people eligible to receive basic services.

Q: In your offices, was electricity pretty reliable for your computers and things?

BAUER: Yes, we had generators. They had brought in large generators for most of the Green Zone.

Q: So, you weren't dependent on the local infrastructure?

BAUER: No, we had these generators the size of mobile homes that were providing power for a lot of our activities.

Q: Was there a gradual switching over from the electricity generated by our generators?

BAUER: When I left we were still on that. There again this infrastructure to move the electricity around was not there. You would be talking high power voltage lines having to be run straight to the Green Zone. We had better uses for that money than providing ourselves with electricity off of the Iraqi system. They needed it more than we did.

Q: When we read that the number of hours of electricity per day has decreased from the time that Saddam was in power is that actually, maybe not true?

BAUER: It's true and it's not true depending on how you look at it. If you take five million people, the whole city of Iraq, and you say okay, there are 1,000 hours of electricity, but out of five million people, they're only getting 600 hours. Under Saddam, there might have been five million people, but he only made sure electricity was available to his one million friends. Now, those one million friends had 1,000 hours. So, now you take that same amount of electricity and you put it onto five million people, well guess what, there's not enough. What the media doesn't tell you is that before there was no electricity. There was no clean water. Sadr City didn't have anything. There are two million people there. They didn't have that. They had one faucet for 40 families. There was no sewage system. It ran in the streets.

Q: It's almost unimaginable.

BAUER: Electricity did not exist. I went there and there was no electrical wiring in the houses.

Q: They were using kerosene?.

BAUER: Right, kerosene oil and what not. So, the stories aren't exactly accurate. Yes,

for the Baath party neighborhood, the elite neighborhood, the business neighborhood, they did not have electricity anymore like they used to. The guy's paying the bribe for electricity. The guy's paying bribes for clean water. All of a sudden, yes, his garden is dying. His coconut, his date palm garden is dying. Well, that's true because now we're providing clean water to Sadr City, which did not have clean water before.

Q: Wow, that's amazing.

BAUER: So, now we're sharing the resources with everybody, so that story is true, but it's not; you've got to hear the whole story to understand, and at first we didn't. A lot of the stuff was damaged. The supplies sort of burnt up and we had to put in all new stuff. One good way of showing electrical ability was take a nighttime photograph of the city.

Q: See what's lit up.

BAUER: See what's lit up and you could just see where halfway through the time I was there the city was more lit up at night than before we even got there. It was brighter, and so that told us right off the bat.

Q: You had some photos to compare it with initially when you got there.

BAUER: Yes, when I first got to Sadr City it was just awash in sewage and when I left there it was pretty dry. The only time we were worried about it was when the rains were coming that it would back up the system. We worry about that here too.

Q: Well, yes, that definitely can happen. It would seem that recently Moqtada al Sadr has kind of been—I don't want to say neutralized, but things are a little calmer, pacified. Was he a figure that came to your attention while you were there?

BAUER: Yes.

Q: You had some sense of him?

BAUER: Yes, actually I drove right by him on the street one day. Unfortunately, I was in a private vehicle with just one interpreter and I couldn't do anything about it.

Q: I guess he wasn't doing anything wrong either.

BAUER: No, but a lot of these guys, shall we say among the Iraqi people in Sadr and Sistani, at first they're saber rattlers. They want to be brought to the table to have their share of power and that's why they made the noise they made. It wasn't necessarily they didn't want a rebellion; they wanted to be part of the power structure. So what we saw was a lot of, [was] I think some of the people, the religious clerics, found out that it

wasn't going to be Sharia law and they weren't going to have their little dominion carry over into the political realm and that it was a democracy and they felt left out. So, the more saber rattling they could raise up, I think the eventual purpose for some of them was meant to be brought to the table as a power broker.

Q: Well, Sistani became an important figure in our calculations. Hopefully, that situation is under control. A final question is a two-part question. Would you recommend some specific prior training that maybe you didn't have or orientation that would have been helpful? What are your thoughts on prior training?

BAUER: I think people gave me a good understanding of the culture and some of its history. Not necessarily the sensitivity part, shall we say. I saw a lot of people who were very sensitive to people, but just to understand the mindset of the people over there would have been helpful.

Q: Get some real information.

BAUER: Some real information.

Q: As opposed to politeness?

BAUER: Right. Some of the training was "oh, don't put your feet up towards them" and how to say hello properly and that was of absolutely no use. A lot of the Iraqi people I met were, I don't know how you would say it, they were Muslim, but they were secular Muslims. It was incidental. They didn't go the whole nine yards. My grandma was a Muslim; my mom's a Muslim, so I'm a Muslim. They were practicing. So, what had been explained to us in our training was a lot of the Muslim sensitivities, which was of absolute no use to me. But it was more of how do these people think. What's their worldview? What's their experience with democracy? I think that would have been very helpful. And the history. I had to learn the history very quickly so when I did the interviews I could understand and question the people about their activities. I had to learn the history very quickly.

Q: Were you prepared for the degree of corruption you found there for example?

BAUER: Yes, based on what I've seen in the past, yes.

Q: For future individuals in your position, as governance officer, what advice would you have for them?

BAUER: Have really good interpersonal skills with people facilitators. I found my work with the non-profits to be very valuable. Cross-cultural experiences were very valuable because that's what I mainly did, to marry different groups. You've got to have a

network. You've got to be able to build a network of information that you can draw upon. You can't do it yourself, you can't do everything yourself. You can't be the specialist, the "go to" guy to solve everybody's problems or make this project happen, but you can be the "go to" person for information, to solve problems as they crop up or to make sure an issue was being dealt with. But I saw some people get bogged down in the micromanagement of a project which ended up meaning that they just didn't have the time then to go out and help more people. You get really bogged down seeing a school rebuilt and almost playing the role of a general contractor. What they did, they did not need that. There were people that you could hand that off to. That was important.

Q: Well, Eric, I have to thank you, first for your service, which is very impressive, what you were able to do in a short time. I've been a Peace Corps volunteer and a Foreign Service Officer and I have a sense of how you work cross- culturally and it's not a given that you can accomplish anything and leave a lasting impact, so I am very thankful that you were willing to give your time and your skills and your sensitivity to this project. Also, thank you for the interview today. I'll give you a chance for a final comment.

BAUER: I think one of the things that I try to tell everybody when I came back here is that the Iraqi people, by and large 99.9% of them I met, the one that I met that was against us, he changed his mind as time went on, they were grateful. They were so happy we did what we did. They were afraid because it was a whole new future for them. They wanted me to thank everybody back home for us deposing Saddam and just making the attempt to give them a better life. They lived in constant fear. Stories that people told me when I was doing the interviews and the atrocities that they lived with were just horrendous. I can't even tell my wife what I heard. My kids would go to bed screaming at night. They'd wake up at night screaming if I told them. I mean Saddam had nothing on Hitler or Hitler had nothing on him. The man was an animal and so were his sons.

Q: It seems so that we're starting to forget that. It really helps I think as a reminder to us.

BAUER: People say that he didn't have weapons of mass destruction, which was bull—he had them. I met the people that said he had them and I believe them. Just the abuse of humans that he perpetrated, hundreds of thousands of people that he killed and the ways he killed them.

Q: And seemed to take delight in it.

BAUER: He took very much delight in it and the torture he would perpetrate in broad daylight into the literally just coming in and raping women in the shopping center, just horrendous things. These people lived under that and they were so grateful that we had stopped that. The future is not secure yet. There are attacks, but that doesn't compare to what they were living under before, because before they were powerless. At least now

they have the ability to have the input and make some choices and leave now if they need to. Before they didn't have that ability if they didn't have money. They have a chance at freedom and they want to have a free country. They love their country. They want to be Iraqis. We hear about the diversity and all the warring with each other and a lot of that is the outside, the Iranians don't want to see this happen. A lot of the Middle Eastern Arab countries don't want to see a free democracy in the Middle East. Yes, it would really put a hole in their religious outlook if there were.

Q: Saudi Arabia is not happy?

BAUER: Yes, Saudi Arabia probably doesn't want to see a democratic, elected Muslim Arab country, but I can tell you, the people there were so appreciative of us. I never met one that wasn't, and I met thousands. I was very lucky. I went to neighborhood meetings all the time. I went to events where the general public was there, and I mean I usually had my security guys who were pulling me away saying it's time you've got to go. I was always forcing them to stay later because of the issues, but they were really grateful for us and they still are.

Q: All right, well, it's encouraging to hear that. I wish the reporting back here were a little more accurate.

BAUER: It was so disgusting. It was just so sad and I would tell people, I'd send pictures and e-mails home to people and reports like from USAID of what was happening and the newsletters. People would say we don't see or hear any of this.