

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

DAVID DUNFORD
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interviewed by: Bernard Engel
Initial interview date: August 25, 2004
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Ambassador Dunford is a retired Foreign Service Officer and spent approximately two and a half months in Iraq (April to mid-June 2003) serving as a "Ministerial Liaison" to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While not an Arabic speaker, he spent several tours of duty in Arab countries and previously served as US Ambassador to Oman. He has an MA in political science from Stanford and an undergraduate degree from MIT.

Dunford's principle task was rebuilding the Iraqi Foreign Ministry. The ministry had been severely damaged and was not functioning upon his arrival. In doing so, Dunford worked with others to restore functions so that the Foreign Ministry could assume its role once there was an Iraqi government there to issue instructions. He strongly felt that it was not the role of the United States to impose a new foreign policy, simply to provide the basis for a functioning ministry and a new start.

Rebuilding the Foreign Ministry meant tackling several problems including reaching out to foreign posts, re-staffing, and setting up a visa and passport system. During his time there, Dunford succeeded in making contact with Iraqi posts abroad and persuading many Iraqi embassy personnel to return. This was a major success for him when he considers the communications obstacles. Due to the large number of ministry personnel with Baath party affiliations, he found that the de-Baathification policy an impediment to rebuilding. However, he intuitively worked to find a balance of Shia and Sunni, women and men. Still an area needing to be worked on when Dunford left was the issue of passports, visas, and dealing with the borders. This issue was largely tabled for the time due to the influence of a new person in the Ministry of Interior that did not believe this was a priority.

Dunford pointed to looting as a major U.S. mistake. Though there were enough troops to win the war, there were not enough to stop these kinds of post-war problems. The effects of this miscalculation left Dunford and most other ministries with very little to start and made reconstruction tasks more difficult. In addition, Dunford feels that looting contributed to the atmosphere of lawlessness after the war that is still a problem.

Another area Dunford called to attention dealt with the practical problems of the de-Baathification policy. Although some people needed to be dismissed, Dunford feels that the structure of society led many people to become Baathists not because they were ideologically wedded to Hussein, but because they were also victims of his system. This policy left the U.S. without the skills and knowledge of many Iraqis. It also harmed them in the respect that telling 30,000 people they have no future in Iraq creates a security problem. Without any prospects in

the new Iraqi society, many former Baathists turned to the insurgents as their promise of a future.

This policy connects to a larger ideological problem Dunford mentioned. Building Iraq from the ground-up in the vision of a western, democratic, free market entity may have been ideal, but it was not practical. Dunford believes that the impetus for establishing certain ideals should come from the people, and that working with what's there is necessary. An example he gave of this was ignoring the state-owned industries that were major employers. With a private sector not able to flourish in this security system, this leaves Iraq without major sources of employment. An imposed system based on ideology rather than reality is a mistake.

Finally, communications was another major issue. Although Americans had the ability to re-establish communications, they passed by these opportunities because of a wish to do things cheaply and also to give American business a foothold. The lack of communication seriously harmed the reconstruction effort.

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Q: This is an interview with Ambassador David Dunford. This interview is being done on behalf of the U.S. Institute of Peace and the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training as part of the Iraq Experience Project. My name is Bernard Engel and I will be conducting the interview. Dave, it's good to talk to you. Would you for the record just tell us your name and tell us a little bit about yourself, your education, your professional background, etcetera.

DUNFORD: I'm David Dunford. I was born in New Jersey, grew up in Connecticut, went to Massachusetts Institute of Technology as an undergraduate student, studied engineering and political science, graduated from Stanford with a master's degree in political science. I joined the Foreign Service in 1966, and I served in Ecuador. Then I went to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Oman. I was an economic specialist for much of my career in the Foreign Service, and my last job in Oman was ambassador. After I retired, I have taught at the University of Arizona and at the American Graduate School for International Management in Glendale, Arizona. I've done some consulting for business and the U.S. military, and I worked on a Middle East Development Bank project for the U.S. government in Cairo in 1997 until '98.

Q: You say that you had service in Saudi Arabia and Oman. Would you consider that as being relevant to what you were asked to do in Iraq?

DUNFORD: Certainly, and much of what I was asked to do in Iraq required some basic knowledge of how Arab society functions. The war in Iraq also bore some similarities to the first Gulf War in 1990-91. I was in Saudi Arabia for that, so I think there's certainly some relevance there.

Q: What was the job that you were asked to do in Iraq?

DUNFORD: When I was first asked to go to Iraq, I understood I was to work with one of the economic ministries. I believe it was the Ministry of Industry that was mentioned to me. But over the course of the next several weeks there were a number of changes in Washington, and eventually I ended up in charge of the Iraq Foreign Ministry.

Q: You use the term "work with." What exactly did that mean, or what does that mean?

DUNFORD: Well, it meant in my case I had to go find Iraqis who had been working in the Foreign Ministry and work with them to get the Iraq Foreign Ministry back up and running.

Q: A specific question now: Do you speak Arabic?

DUNFORD: I speak it badly. I have not been through the two-year State Department program, but I have been 10 years in the Arab world and have picked up a little bit on the street.

Q: Did you have an interpreter assigned to you, or did you just have to kind of struggle by? How did that work?

DUNFORD: I never had what I would call a competent interpreter. When I first went to the Foreign Ministry, one of the IRDC Iraqis went with me. I have to scratch my mind to remember what IRDC means. That was one of the groups of Iraqis who trained in Crystal City and were sent out to help with the reconstruction.

Q: Were those Chalabi's people?

DUNFORD: No, not necessarily, although they were certainly working with the Pentagon. Most of the Iraqis were working at the State Department. One of them helped me translate the first day. I also had with me a Romanian ambassador who was fluent in Arabic. On my team was Allen Kepchar, a former consular officer, retired consular officer, who is also fluent in Arabic. And for a couple of weeks I had a British Foreign Service officer who was fluent in Arabic. Depending on the day, who I had with me, we often conducted conversations in English with the Iraqis, but when I needed interpretation there was usually somebody to turn to.

Q: Were you aware of or do you have any knowledge of how the Foreign Ministry had been set up during the regime of Saddam?

DUNFORD: I was called on March 15th, 2003, and I actually arrived in Iraq on April 24th, so I did not know until early April that I would be doing the Foreign Ministry. At that time I was back in Tucson, not clear of whether I was going to Iraq at all. I never had any discussions, either in the State Department or in the Pentagon, about the job I was to do. I did have with me, I think, about a four- or five-page paper I believe was written by a summer intern at the State Department, which suggested a basic strategy for dealing with the Iraqi Foreign Ministry.

Q: Did you have a list of people you could not bring back, i.e., senior people who had too close a tie with Saddam or Baath Party members? Were you given guidance to avoid former Baath Party members or anything like that?

DUNFORD: That's an interesting question. I was not given a whole lot of guidance. We knew that there were 55 guys. Their pictures were memorialized on a deck of cards. We knew we

couldn't work with them. That included the Foreign Minister. I made my own judgment that the next guy in line—I actually interviewed him—that I wasn't going to work with him. Other than that we were simply told to look for potential candidates for leadership of the Foreign Ministry.

Interestingly enough, the guy who I initially started out with was the leader of what we called the Foreign Ministry Steering Group. Some weeks later when the de-Baathification policy was announced, I had to fire him. I had submitted his name to something called the Fusion Cell at the palace, where intelligence agencies hung, and some days after I had fired this guy I got back a piece of paper that said he'd been cleared, even though he clearly was a Baath Party member, under the Bremer March 16th Policy of de-Baathification. I guess what I'm saying is I didn't get much help in terms of guidance or in our intelligence concerning anybody other than the top 55, which I thought was abysmal.

Q: Let me get my dates straight. You say you got there March 15th.

DUNFORD: I got the call from Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary Jim Laroko[PH] in the NEA Bureau. He gave me the call to ask me if I wanted to go to Iraq. My initial reaction was I didn't, but I called him back the next day after talking to my wife and family and decided I'd give it a shot. But it wasn't until early April that I was actually cleared to go. There was a great bureaucratic struggle over which former State Department officers or current State Department officers would actually go and work for Garner.

Q: That's kind of my next question. Garner was still there when you arrived?

DUNFORD: When I arrived in Kuwait, Garner was in charge of ORHA, the Organization for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance. He was in charge of the operation. I arrived April 11th and became part of the team.

Q: And then he stayed, what, just another several weeks, I think, right?

DUNFORD: Well, it seemed longer. Let's see. I think Garner himself went into Iraq about April 21st or 22nd. I went in April 24th with several other senior ministerial liaisons. Garner, I think he was informed in early May that Jerry Bremer would be coming out to lead the overall effort. He stayed there for a couple weeks after that.

Q: Once Bremer got there, did you get any better guidance than you had had previously? You said previously you really had very little. Did Bremer's operation improve things?

DUNFORD: I think it did. The de-Baathification policy was really the only guidance, and it was unwanted guidance in many ways, although I found that in the Foreign Ministry, other than the top guy I'd been working with, most of the Baathists, the clear Baathists, had selected themselves out by not showing up for work. So it really didn't affect me as much as it affected some of the other people working for the ministry.

Q: That's an interesting comment, because in previous interviews our interviewees have also made the point that the de-Baathification process, really it was people self selected. They knew if they were going to be in trouble and they simple didn't show up, and, therefore, there wasn't that much need for the specific de-Baathification guidance. You're simply confirming that.

DUNFORD: Let me add a couple of points there.

Q: Please.

DUNFORD: There was an exceptions procedure. Most of us thought that that would allow us to keep people we thought were very useful. But the exceptions procedure, Bremer insisted that he do it himself. He insisted that anybody for whom we were applying for an exception be first fired and then, if possible, later brought back. Both I and some of my colleagues didn't totally honor that. It was a pretty tough policy. I put in for two exceptions, I think, which was an extraordinarily small amount, and it wasn't until after I left, I think, that the exceptions actually came through.

The other comment I want to make is that I had an interesting situation that most of my other colleagues didn't have and that is I had a lot of Iraqi ambassadors stationed abroad who needed to be brought back to Baghdad. Most of them, once they did come back—or if they didn't come back, they were automatically fired, but most of them did come back—we found subject to the de-Baathification policy.

Q: An interesting question: What percentage roughly, would you say, of those ambassadors actually came back?

DUNFORD: I was quite surprised. I had expected less than half, and I think in the end we got about 75 percent of them. They seemed eager to come back and talk and justify themselves, even though most of them, I think, understood that they didn't have a place in the future Foreign Ministry.

Q: This may sound like a niggling question, but did we wind up paying to bring their households back and their goods and their cars and all that sort of thing? Or did we just send them an airplane ticket and say, "Come on back."

DUNFORD: That's an interesting question. I left before those kinds of details had been worked out, but I believe it was our intention that the Foreign Ministry itself would be liable to bring these people back. But we never got down to that point. We didn't have the resources to send out memos and do the usual bureaucratic procedures. We simply sent a message out to the foreign Iraqi posts abroad saying the Chief of Mission had to report by June 6th, I think it was, or lose any chance to rejoin the Foreign Ministry.

Q: You mentioned the Chief of Mission. What about the staffs of the embassies, number one, and number two, any local employees that might have been employed at the various embassies?

DUNFORD: Again, our working assumption was the staff would continue to be paid, and, in fact, Iraqi missions abroad had quite a few of the resources themselves. So in most cases the embassies were able to continue making salary payments, if that was your question.

Q: Yeah, that was part of it. In a number of countries one would assume there's not only an ambassador but seven, eight, nine, 10 officers and staff and what have you, many of whom, I suspect, would be analogous to our career officers, who are out there trying to do a job, and how do they continue to live? So what you're saying is that at least, I suspect, the bigger embassies had some money in the bank and were able to continue operate.

DUNFORD: Most embassies were able to continue to operate. I'm sure there were some hardship cases in some parts of the world, and we would hear about those. It's interesting how we reestablished communications with these embassies, I might tell you.

Q: Yeah, I was going to ask about communications.

DUNFORD: The Foreign Ministry communications, of course, were broken. We had satellite telephone, "tharyas"[PH] we called them, and I was allowed to give maybe half a dozen or so—I can't remember exactly—to Foreign Ministry people. In order to kind of send instructions, what we did was we simply found some Foreign Ministry stationery kind of in the rubble—you know, the Foreign Ministry had been totally burned and looted—and one of the young Arabs had a laptop with Arabic software, so we were able to type up a message on the stationery. Then we brought it back to the palace where the only scanner, I think, in the country was, and scanned it into a document which we then emailed to nearby posts which still had communications, and they in turn sent it around to all the other Iraqi posts. That was how we got the initial instruction out. Then what we did was simply set up a hotmail account. It's actually called iraqmfa@hotmail.com. Although a couple of posts tried to knock us off the air, I think, by sending large attachments and tricks like that, we were able to finally in a couple of days get running smoothly. The Iraqis abroad were hungry to communicate, so we were able fairly quickly to accumulate information about their personnel. We were able over time to identify which of the personnel were Muhaberat[PH] or actual intelligence, and which were senior Baathists and which were not.

Q: This was done by you and your colleagues almost on an ad hoc basis?

DUNFORD: Yeah, sure, we did. We had no instructions or guidance on how to do this; we just did it.

Q: And nobody, to the best of your knowledge, had thought about this?

DUNFORD: Well, I had thought about it.

Q: I mean prior to....

DUNFORD: I had quite a bit of time between the time I knew I had this job and when I actually made contact with the Foreign Ministry, and I did up a draft instruction, which I sent to Washington, but I think they ignored it. You know, we pretty well operated on our own in the palace. Garner was fine with whatever you wanted to do to get the job done. So I just did it. I did get a call from Laroko[PH] of the senior staff after the instruction was sent out wondering why I hadn't coordinated it more. It was very difficult to coordinate anything with Washington given our communications. We didn't have cable traffic.

Q: That leads me to the next question, and that was going to be: Who in Washington were you coordinating with to the extent that you could coordinate? Was it State? Was it the Pentagon? Who was it?

DUNFORD: The only point of coordination I had—and it wasn't a point of coordination; it was really just sort of a drop box—was a guy in NEA NGA, I think, who was more or less the desk officer for ORHA or later OCPA. We could email him on classified email, so I let him know what I was doing. I figured if I was doing something that angered anybody I'd hear about, and, in fact, I did hear about it.

Q: But that didn't really anger them.

DUNFORD: They weren't unhappy with what I'd done. They were just unhappy that they didn't know about it before.

Q: You said something earlier about some State Department people being allowed to go, others not being wanted. Give me a little bit more on that if you could.

DUNFORD: All right. I said I got the call on the 15th, the war started on the 19th. I believe I got to Washington the next day, the 20th. Then I was told I was on hold, and there were seven other people, I believe, on hold with me, including Robin Rafel[PH]. There were eight of us. So after I got my medical clearances, got my passport, got my building pass, got all that stuff done, I went up and worked on the Iraqi Task Force for about a week, and I took the midnight shift, waiting for this titanic struggle. It was basically waged between Grossman and Feith over at the Pentagon, although I guess Rumsfeld and Powell got into it on occasion. There was a news article somewhere during that period—it would have been somewhere around April 1st, 2003—where Rumsfeld is quoted as saying these people that the State Department had put up were too low profile and bureaucratic. I think that was his quote. Anyway, finally somewhere around April 5th the Pentagon and the State Department agreed that half the people could go as senior ministerial liaisons, and that included Robin Rafel[PH], Ken Keys[PH], our AFSA President Tim Carney, who ended up my roommate, and the fourth guy was our ambassador to Nigeria, whom I

know so well. Anyway, only four could go and I didn't make the cut. They offered me to be deputy to Tim Carney at the Ministry of Industry, so I went back to Tucson, talked it over with my wife, and said, "You know, what the hell. The situation's so fluid, I'll find something useful to do over there," so I said I'd go anyway. They called back about a day later and said Ken Keys[PH] couldn't go because of medical issues, and because I had been a good soldier and agreed to go anyway under those circumstances, they gave me Ken Keys' job, which was the Foreign Ministry.

Q: You mentioned Robin Rafel[PH]. She had done an interview for this project and I read it, and one of the points that was very interesting in that interview was her contention that so much of what she, at least, was asked to do was ideologically driven as opposed to being driven by practicality and by rational analysis of the situation. You don't have to comment on this if you don't want to, but I think it's an interesting issue and I wonder what your thoughts would be on that.

DUNFORD: Well, the de-Baathification policy was ideologically driven, I'm fairly certain. Jay Garner's instincts were that in order to get the job done, we needed all the help we could get, and that meant basically any Iraqi not on the top 55 could be useful, and we operated on that assumption. We made some judgments along the way that some people would not be useful, but at the same time we were prepared to work with most of the people that were still at the ministries. When Jerry Bremer came, that sort of turned around. Suddenly the top 30,000 Baathist parties were out, and that was ideological. It certainly wasn't practical. What that meant, in my view, was those 30,000 people were basically told they had no future in Iraq. They were Iraqi; they had really no other place to go. Every one of them probably was the head of a fairly large family of Iraqis, so with that policy we made very quickly a huge number of enemies, and many of those enemies we find shooting at us today. I did, sort of under the guise of a memo on the Foreign Ministry, I did a memo to Bremer not challenging his de-Baathification policy, but simply saying we now are going to have a major security problem and we'd better be ready for it.

Q: Did other people raise that same point?

DUNFORD: Yeah, I think most of us working in the trenches with the ministries felt very much the same way—not all of us but quite a few.

Q: But it didn't seem to have much of an impact.

DUNFORD: That was very ideological. The other, what I found, very annoying issue, which I would say was ideological was the injection into what we were doing of what I called the "Crystal City Iraqis." Their initials were IRDC, Iraqi Reconstruction Development Council or something like that. These guys, there were about 200 of them. They were recruited under an USAID contract—I think Paul Wolfowitz was the driving force—and I was assigned four of them, and most other ministries were assigned several of them, and they were very ideological.

They were very much of the view that basically Iraq needed to be destroyed and rebuilt from the ashes, which conflicted with our more practical approach, to just get various Iraqi ministries up and running. Garner, to his credit, I think, tried to control these guys and make sure that they towed the line and make sure that we didn't bring too many of them too soon. But when Bremer got there, pretty much the floodgates opened and they all came.

Just to go back, I've got a great deal of respect for Bremer. I think basically, before he got his airplane ticket to Iraq or whatever it was, he was pretty much instructed that he would have to implement these two policies, de-Baathification and bringing over the Crystal City Iraqis.

Q: Other interviewees have also talked about these what you call Crystal City Iraqis, these IRDC people, and at least one interviewee that I spoke with referred to them as thugs, at least some of them as thugs. I think he was talking specifically about Chalabi's people. The phrase he used was "CIA-trained thugs." You're not using that but....

DUNFORD: No, I think we're talking about different people. There was a free Iraqi force, I think, which were trained by us, who were basically affiliated with Chalabi. I think we're talking about them, and those are probably who they were referring to. Chalabi had his own operation, and many of the Crystal City Iraqis were sympathetic with Chalabi, but there were two different operations.

Q: After the de-Baathification policy went into effect and you lost all these people and you, I guess, kind of re-staffed the ministry, what about the Shiite-Sunni balance or lack thereof? Did you have any kind of instructions to try and get more Shiites in or fewer Sunnis or what have you, anything on that issue?

DUNFORD? I don't remember any specific instructions, but I'm sure I absorbed the general feeling that clearly there had to be some better balance between Sunnis and Shias heard. I also insisted that there be a better balance between men and women in the Foreign Ministry. I recruited, through our steering groups, Atela el Hashabene[PH]—I don't know if you remember the name.

Q: She was killed, wasn't she?

DUNFORD: She was killed in September.

Q: She was a member of the Iraqi Governing Council.

DUNFORD: Initially on the first day, when I met with Foreign Ministry people, I met her. Then she didn't show up for a while, so I finally sent a runner after her, and she came in and I got our Steering Committee to give her a spot. She did so well at that that we sent her to New York, I guess, to an Iraqi donors conference to be one of the delegation to represent Iraq. Eventually

she was made chairman of that delegation, and she did so well at that job that they boosted her up to the Governing Council. Then, of course, she was a target. That's one of my great regrets, that and another guy who was on the Steering Committee, Passam Kuba[PH], who [was killed] in the month of June.

Q: Another one of the men that I interviewed, one of his responsibilities was providing security for the members of the Iraqi National Congress, and one of his great regrets was that, because of bureaucratic inertia and other problems, he was not able to do what he wanted to do and he felt that because of that this woman lost her life. And it was quite a loss, apparently.

DUNFORD: It was.

Q: What about questions of funding? Where were you getting your funding from, if you were getting any at all, and were you getting sufficient funding to do the things you needed to do?

DUNFORD: One of the things that actually worked despite the chaos was the Treasury unit there. David Nummy ran it, and he had quite a bit of experience doing this kind of thing before. He came in and briefed us on how we could get money for our ministries. As a result, I got three branches of money. One of the first things we wanted to do was get money into the Iraqis' hands, so we paid each of the employees of the Foreign Ministry, and all government employees, 20 bucks, and that required payroll lists and things like that. We got good instructions from the Treasury team. The military unit that disbursed the money was great, competent. So I got, let's see, about \$20,000 for salaries, another \$20,000 to rehabilitate one of the Foreign Ministry outbuildings—they call it the Protocol Building—and then later, I think, \$35,000 to rehabilitate the Diplomatic Institute. These two buildings were really our workspace, because the main building had to be totally rehabilitated. Now, on funding the reconstruction of the main building, what we did, I had a very talented building engineer, an Iraqi who had been transferred to the Foreign Ministry only a year before. He had previously worked in the Ministry of Construction, I believe. So he knew the Iraqi companies, and he actually put out bids for reconstructing the ministry. The Japanese, through the U.N., agreed to finance part of this reconstruction, because they had funded the initial building. So we took that over to the palace, and there was some committee chaired by Peter McPherson[PH] to make the final decision on such expenditures. When I left Iraq in the middle of June, I was still pretty frustrated because the spending for reconstructing the ministry hadn't been approved, but, much to my surprise, it eventually was approved, even though it's being done now by Iraqi companies. I think many of my colleagues experienced much greater frustration because, in my view, there was much too great an emphasis on providing business to U.S. companies and not enough to finding the low-cost bidder or the best company to do the job.

Q: Up until quite recently, the Coalition Provisional Authority was the government of Iraq, and now there's, of course, the interim government. What exactly was the role of a foreign ministry, even a foreign ministry being rebuilt? What was its role when the CPA in fact was running the country, or did it have a role?

DUNFORD: That's a good question. I saw my job as simply to get the institution up to the point where it could function, once there was an Iraqi government to issue instructions, and I made it clear that I did not see my function as to do anything about Iraqi foreign policy, even though there were a lot of people who suggested that I ought to reengineer Iraqi foreign policy while I was at it. What the ministry did, whether it had much of a function or not, it did sort of open relationships with other foreign embassies around town. Indeed, as I left, the Foreign Ministry was in the process of issuing badges to all members of foreign missions so that they could show them at checkpoints and things like that. People came to the Foreign Ministry to complain about issues or report, and we would pass them on through the palace. The Foreign Ministry sort of functioned as it had, even though it had no real authority.

Q: What about the counselor side of things, issuing passports and that kind of function?

DUNFORD: Allen Kepchar was my deputy, a very talented guy. He saw all the way back in Kuwait that we had a number of issues to deal with. Are Iraqi travel documents still valid, if Iraqis would be wanting to travel abroad? Iraqi borders, there was no longer any immigration authority, so how could you control traffic going back and forth across the border? We pushed these issues hard and high for a great period of time, but didn't get very far. It simply was just put, I think, by Bremer into the too-hard category. In this case we also had to coordinate with the Ministry of Interior people. A New York cop named Bernie Kerrick[PH] came in some weeks after I got there, and he took over, but he didn't give this issue a whole lot of priority. There was a Brit working for him, that I think he fired, who knew the most about it. So as I left, despite a whole lot of good work by Allen Kepchar, we hadn't gotten very far. He had contacted the British company that had made the previous Iraqi passport, was ready to go with passports, but, as I understand it, nothing got done really until the CPA dissolved last—when was it? June.

Q: June 30th, I think.

DUNFORD: And, of course, the borders are still an issue. Everybody at the palace who had some kind of an issue, let's say, with Kuwaiti visas or things like that, had come to the humble Foreign Ministry office in the palace. At times there were as many as six of us and we were seated in a hallway across from the bathroom between Robin Rafel's[PH] office and several other offices. When I say the Foreign Ministry office, you probably have notions of grandeur.

Q: No, I don't think so.

DUNFORD: There were two desks, two computer stations, and we also had rolls of toilet paper in case anybody ran out. I offered to sell them for \$10 a roll.

Q: You talked about the Japanese funding some of your operations. What other countries played any kind of significant role, if any, either from a financial point of view or for providing people or other skills?

DUNFORD: In terms of funding, I'm not in a position to answer that because the Japanese were the only ones that offered to help with the Foreign Ministry. After I had gone, I think, others then approached to help with the Diplomatic Institute and things like that. I will say, though, as far as helping with people, the Romanians were very active. As I mentioned, the Romanian ambassador, whom I met in Kuwait, agreed to help me out in the Foreign Ministry, but he was also head of a large group of Romanian technical advisors that he very much wanted to employ in Iraq. And the British, of course, were quite helpful. The British provided me at least for two weeks a very talented diplomat, although they then almost immediately assigned her to Afghanistan.

Q: You used the phrase before, "pushing an issue." How exactly did you do that? In other words, did you attend a Bremer staff meeting once a week, or how was the structure set up for you to have input into the plans that CPA was formulating and eventually executing?

DUNFORD: Initially we were part of the civil administration pillar, and a guy named Mike Mobs[PH], who was a Pentagon lawyer, was in charge of it. If we wanted to push an issue up, at least in theory, we were supposed to push it up through him. He was not, in my view, a very effective administrator. In fact, he left very suddenly one day on May 1st, and Robin Rafel[PH] took over his job. Over time, I think, Robin was always called Interim Coordinator or something like that, but she was basically our contact with the front office. If we were pushing up, it would go from Robin up to Pat Kennedy or Bremer. I met, I think, with Bremer maybe three times on Foreign Ministry issues, but I sent memos. But often, you really had to follow up with his outside staff. That's usual in a bureaucracy.

Q: Moving away from kind of structural issues and more toward substantive issues, what was being done with the people that you were hiring in this institute that you were building to begin to formulate ideas or plans for a future Iraqi foreign policy—what did Kissinger used to call it? I can't remember the term he used to use—so that when the Iraqis themselves took over, there was a plan, there was a focus, on how we are now going to relate to the rest of the world? Or was there any of this thinking going on?

DUNFORD: Again, I didn't see that as part of my job.

Q: Did the Iraqis that were part of this new rebuilt foreign policy establishment, how did they look at it?

DUNFORD: Let me walk you back through a few structural issues, and then we'll get to that, just back to my first day, how I started. I think I got there the 24th, so it was maybe the 27th of April. Finally we got the military to get us to the Foreign Ministry, and I found the place was burned and looted and there were papers all over the place. I found one guy, a young guy from Protocol, wandering around the rubble. We told him to come back in two days with all the employees of the Foreign Ministry he could find. I had great misgivings, incidentally, since

everybody in Baghdad by now knew I was going to be at the Foreign Ministry two days later, that I was setting up an ambush, but happily that was before the bad guys really got organized. So we got 150 people there two days later, and we picked a handful of them out, took them over to the conference center to meet, and from that came a steering committee of about—it varied, but it stabilized at about six people. Two were very practical, hands-on people, a buildings engineer and a communications specialist. One was in charge of overseas missions. I mentioned the woman that I recruited over time. The other two were just sort of generalists, one of whom became the head of the Steering Committee when we had to de-Baathify a former head, Mohamad Amim[PH].

So the six of us were dealing with a lot of practical issues, like how do we organize payments, how do we get the light fixtures back up, how do we get the electricity back on, how do we refurbish the Foreign Ministry, how do we clean up the place. So a lot of time was spent with those sorts of issues. Then my highest priority was really regaining control of Iraqi posts abroad. I've talked about that a little. When we got all the ambassadors back, we interviewed them all and wrote memos on them all. Another thing we might discuss at some point is.... [End Side]

Q: ...interview with Ambassador Dave Dunford. Okay, Dave, go ahead.

DUNFORD: I guess you were asking me the question: "How did we go about thinking about Iraqi foreign policy issues?" What I was saying is we were dealing with a lot of nitty-gritty issues about how to get the institution back up and running and how to regain control of the posts abroad. What we did do, though, is get the Steering Committee working on an organization chart, a new organization chart. The reason we did that is because we were trying to figure out how to put the Iraqi employees back to work. There were 1,000 employees, but given our facilities, we couldn't have them all coming into work at once, but we wanted to gradually rebuild the institution and we needed an organization chart to do that. So we had lots of debates about how the ministry should be reorganized and, of course, there are some implications when you reorganize for foreign policy: do you have a humanitarian section, do you have a human rights division, things like that.

Q: My suspicion is that on the organization chart of the Foreign Ministry under Saddam you would not find an office of human rights.

DUNFORD: Actually, surprisingly enough, you did find it.

Q: Really?

DUNFORD: Yes, but its functions were probably not similar to that in our office or the Europeans' office.

Q: I would expect not. So you're saying then that you really didn't have the opportunity to work with some of the professionals that remained on longer-range issues, you were too focused on just getting things up and running?

DUNFORD: Well, I probably had the opportunity but, again, it just wasn't a priority to reengineer Iraqi foreign policy. I firmly believed, and told anyone who would listen, that that was the job of the new Iraqi government when and if it would emerge. For us, the occupying power, to try to remake Iraqi foreign policy didn't make sense to me and may even have been in violation of some Geneva Convention.

Q: We talked a little bit about how you related to the CPA. Was there any relationship with the military there or the UN or any of the NGOs? Did you have any relationships there? Were you building any between the Foreign Ministry and these institutions?

DUNFORD: With the military, ORHA was a military organization. It was organized in a military way. General Garner was the head of the organization and he was surrounded by various—they called them Cs[PH]. In Tampa and CENTCOM you called them Js for "Joint"; well, C, I guess, was for "Coalition"; one was "Personnel and two was Intelligence and three was Operations, and so on and so forth. So we were a military operation. I should add I think that was a mistake. That was one of the great flaws of our whole reconstruction effort was that we tackled it as a military issue rather than a political issue. When Bremer came in, he inherited this relationship. He made several efforts to re-jigger it, but still when you walked around the palace even in mid-June as I was leaving, 90 percent of the people in the palace were military. Basically all our logistics were furnished by the military; any kind of a logistical issue, like keeping your computers running or making sure you had enough water to survive, was all military.

Q: You say in June. So you were there slightly more than a year?

DUNFORD: Oh, no, no. I actually physically got to Iraq the 24th of April and I left the 16th of June of 2003.

Q: Oh, that same year. I misunderstood that. So you were there just two, two and a half months?

DUNFORD: Yeah, it was seven weeks. I was in Kuwait for maybe 11 days preparing to go in, and in Washington and Tucson while the bureaucratic fighting was going on.

Q: So, let's see, as the president put it, the major combat operations were over in May sometime, right?

DUNFORD: Yeah, it was May 1st he stood on the aircraft carrier.

Q: So when you went in, there were still combat operations underway?

DUNFORD: I'm not sure you'd call it combat operations, but there clearly was shooting going on. Some of the military called it celebratory gunfire, but I think we knew better, and obviously the shooting continued all the time I was there.

Q: This goes to the next question. Take a couple of minutes, if you will, just to describe what it was like physically, the environment, living conditions, the security situation, how you felt about these things, if you can do that for us.

DUNFORD: Sure. When we got to the palace, you know, the windows had been blown out and there was dust everywhere and there was no electricity and there was no water, so we were eating MREs, we were using flashlights. We, the ministerial liaisons, were way down at one end of the palace, and Baghdad Central, Barbara Bodene's[PH] operation, was way down at the other end of the palace. Garner and the Cs, the military staff, were in the center of the palace. In order to get to the port-a-potties, which were our only johns the first several days, you had to walk all the way down to the center of the palace, which, I would say, is roughly a half a mile, and go out the back to the port-a-john. We'd been there maybe three days when portable showers were set up, so we were then able to take showers. But for several days we were eating MREs by candlelight. Then gradually KBR started introducing things. I guess maybe the second morning I was there there was coffee. The third morning there were croissants; maybe for lunch suddenly hamburgers and hot dogs came out. Over time a real cafeteria operation was set up where we had three hot meals a day, but that took a couple weeks, I think.

Q: What about housing?

DUNFORD: Housing: we were upstairs in the palace, three of us, Tim Carney, John—AFSA John, what is his name? Anyway, there were two former ambassadors and one active ambassador. We had better conditions than many. Some of them were in rooms of eight beds, I think, like dormitories. The problem was air conditioning. By the day I left, June 16th, the bedroom was never air-conditioned. It was 117 during the day, I think, in June. It was like 100 or high 90s at night, so I pretty much slept with wet towels over my head, things like that. The military could have air-conditioned that room by June, but their strategy was to get us to move out to, first the trailers in back, and then the Hotel Rashid. I had little interest in doing that because I thought the Hotel Rashid was a target and, indeed, it became the target later in 2003.

Q: But the real serious insurgency hadn't started by the time you left, I take it.

DUNFORD: The violence was starting to increase. You could tell the honeymoon with the Iraqi people was over. The military, their instructions were pretty much to drive through traffic situations without stopping or apologizing, and you could just see the slow burn start to build on the Iraqis. But there certainly wasn't the organized violence that there is today.

Q: I'd like to move on to kind of a second part here. We've spent a little bit over an hour now kind of talking about what you did, what support you had, what guidance you did or didn't have, etcetera, and now what I'd like to focus on is the successes, the failures, the lessons, what might have been done better, what was done well, your advice, etcetera. Let's take it kind of a step at a time. Let me ask you: How do you see your work in terms of success and failures? What do you think you really accomplished there, or didn't accomplish?

DUNFORD: Well, let me start with the Foreign Ministry, if I may.

Q: Sure.

DUNFORD: I think we had very good success getting that back up and functioning as an institution. I think my greatest success there was getting control of the Iraqi posts abroad. Given the communications issues, I thought we did an amazing job of getting in contact with these missions, getting control over them, persuading the senior Iraqis to come back to Baghdad, interviewing them. We had put together—and largely Allen Kepchar deserves the credit for this—a roster of Iraqi Foreign Ministry important personnel that, I think, pretty closely identified all of them in terms of their Baath Party status and in terms of whether they were Muhaberat[PH] or not.

Q: What is Muhaberat[PH]?

DUNFORD: It's Iraqi Intelligence. Obviously the Foreign Ministry posts abroad were riddled with Iraqi Intelligence. I considered that a very important priority because they had resources, they had operatives. They had the ability, I think, to cause a lot of damage to U.S. and other interests. So I consider that a major achievement. The fact that we were able to contract for the refurbishment of the Iraqi Foreign Ministry in such short time, I think, is a lesson that should have been learned by a lot of people. I think in many other cases we spent too much time making sure U.S. business got a foothold in Iraq; and U.S. business, because of the security situation, wasn't all that eager to get a foothold in Iraq. There were plenty of Iraqi companies around or plenty of European companies around who were willing to do the job. My philosophy going into the job was to do it quickly, do it well, and get all the help you can get. Obviously in many cases, we weren't able to do it quickly enough and we weren't able to do it well, for reasons I'm sure you're familiar with. We didn't reach out and get all the help we could get.

Q: Were active stumbling blocks put in your way and, if so, by whom?

DUNFORD: Active stumbling block?

Q: In other words, if you wanted to reach out for an Iraqi company or a European company to get a job done, what prevented you from doing that?

DUNFORD: I'm probably not the right person to answer this, because I kind of blew my proposal for redoing the Foreign Ministry through the CPA bureaucracy, such as it was, pretty early on. I'm still amazed, looking back, that we were able to get permission for Iraqi companies to rebuild the Foreign Ministry, that we didn't have to get Bechtel or somebody like that to do it.

Q: You're saying that had it been six months later....

DUNFORD: I am suggesting that a lot of other people had faced obstacles.

Q: A little bit later on, do you think?

DUNFORD: Yeah.

Q: Let's go back to the communications issues. You wanted to talk about that. Go ahead.

DUNFORD: We get to Iraq and we have "faryas" [PH]—they're Swiss or something like that; they're satellite telephone. Basically we broke the Iraqi communications system. Initially we had intended to leave them intact, but over time, I think, pressure built on the military to take it out because of concern that Saddam was using it to do us damage. Anyway, when we got there, there was no workable phone system, so we had satellite telephones. Now, the way a telephone works, or the way this one works, is you have to go outside and acquire the satellite, and then you can make the call. But that means if you're calling somebody else on a satellite telephone, they have to be outside waiting for your call. You can go to a window and if you're in the right place in a building, you can sometimes hear the phone ring. It's not a very practical way to talk to somebody else in Baghdad.

So we had no real ability to talk to each other in the palace or to talk to Iraqis in Baghdad. I think that was a horrible impediment to doing our job. It was not only an impediment to us doing our job but it was an impediment to the Iraqis in getting their political system back up and running. How do Kurds and Shias and Sunnis work out things if they can't talk to each other on the telephone?

I understand that the Kuwaitis had offered to extend their mobile phone network all the way up to Baghdad, which would have covered the southern and central part of the country, and that we turned them down because we had a contract with MCI WorldCom to do the mobile phone system. But MCI WorldCom, for a variety of reasons, wasn't able to get it done early enough or fast enough. I think part of it had to do with the security situation. Part of it had to do, I think, with the fact that they used U.S. technology and the Iraqis used the European technology. Anyway, there's a story there I don't know all the details of.

I find it appalling that we who can communicate with people on the moon or communicate with the president anywhere he is or put a CENTCOM four-star in communication with virtually any of his troops, but we came totally unprepared to set up a communication system in Baghdad.

We worked with civil affairs guys—it wasn't just us, it was the military, too—we worked with the 352nd Civil Affairs Battalion—I may have that term wrong since I'm not a military guy—and they had no two-way radio. Now, in southern Arizona when I go on a bird-watching trip we have two-way radios. These guys had no radios. They had one working phone line in their headquarters, I believe. When they got ambushed, which happened, they didn't have any way to call for help.

It's not that we don't have the technology, it's just we were trying to do this operation on the cheap. Communications, I think, was really the most egregious failure. Well, stepping back a little bit, I think there were four major mistakes that have gotten us into the situation where we are now. Are you ready for them?

Q: Go ahead.

DUNFORD: First mistake: We didn't stop the looting. We didn't prevent the looting. That basically goes back to the issue that we didn't have enough troops on the ground. We had enough troops to win the war, but we didn't have enough troops to stabilize the country. So everything got looted. I was prepared to walk into a foreign ministry and take the elevator up to the top floor, the minister's office, and start working, but I think I've described what I found. Everything but the Ministry of Oil was looted.

Q: How come the Ministry of Oil wasn't looted?

DUNFORD: Because the Ministry of Oil was a high priority for protection. I believe Garner and ORHA submitted requests that several other buildings, including the central bank and Foreign Ministry and perhaps even the museum, be on the list of buildings to be protected, but CENTCOM didn't have the forces to do it, or didn't feel they had the forces to do it. So what you had, of course, was all this widespread looting. It made reconstruction that much harder, and it also, I think, established a sort of atmosphere of lawlessness throughout the country that we haven't recovered from yet. Looting security was the first major issue.

Communications, which I've discussed, I think, is the second major issue.

De-Baathification I see as a huge mistake because we basically told an important group of Iraqis, most of whom I considered to be victims of Saddam rather than collaborators with him, we basically told them they had no future in Iraq, and I think we're paying for that now. It's not just the 30,000 de-Baathified but, of course, all the military, all the intelligence, all the information ministry, all the presidency, all of them were fired.

Then the fourth mistake is, I think, in our ideological fervor to go in and remake Iraq as a free-market capitalist economy, we basically paid far too little attention to the state-owned industries, which were major employers, and as a result, very few of them have been able to get back up and

running. Because of the security situation, of course, there hasn't been the emergence of a private sector to replace these industries.

Q: There has been a fair amount of talk, not recently but earlier on and it's also come out in some of the interviews we've done, about a document that apparently the State Department had drawn up over the course of the last couple of years, I guess, in a sense a plan for rebuilding the country or a plan of action post-hostility, and the fact that the Pentagon apparently had just totally disregarded that particular document, that study. If I'm not mistaken, at least certainly the de-Baathification question was addressed in that study. I wonder if you're familiar with that, number one, and, number two, do you have any comment on whether that plan would have helped had they paid attention to it?

DUNFORD: I assume by "plan" you're referred to the Freedom of Iraq project that Tom Warwick headed up.

Q: I'm not 100 percent sure, but I've just seen these references in news reports, etcetera, about a "document" that the Department had prepared and worked on.

DUNFORD: I don't think it was a document; I think it was a whole series of documents.

Q: Probably, yeah.

DUNFORD: Tom Warwick, what the State Department, using him as a leader, did was set up a whole structure of committees involving Iraqi exiles and experts in various aspects of Iraqi government and society, so there was a committee for virtually everything. There was a committee for the Foreign Ministry, I believe. Those committees met periodically over a year and produced papers designed to provide guidance about how to handle various issues. So there's a whole wealth of material that was prepared before the war designed to help us with reconstruction. Because when I was in Washington before I went I spent most of my time in the State Department, I did meet Warwick and I met some other people and I did read some of the material. I was handicapped by the fact that I didn't even know what my job would be. So I read a lot. I had a pretty good idea of the overall thrust of the guidance. But it's true that, when I got to Iraq—unfortunately I didn't bring any of it with me because it was very bulky—it wasn't available in Baghdad or Kuwait. Garner and the leadership of ORHA made little reference to it. Indeed, we basically just worked with our wits and figured it out from scratch. If I'd had more time, I would have loved to have gone to the library and read about German and Japanese reconstruction and how those things went.

Q: But, Dave, let me ask you this question. You were a retired person and you were brought back in. Isn't it reasonable to think that those people who were actively involved in this for the past couple of years would have had the time to go back and read what happened after the Second World War in Germany and Japan and to perhaps draw some lessons.

DUNFORD: It certainly seems reasonable.

Q: Do you want to even take a stab at why that wasn't done?

DUNFORD: Clearly there was great suspicion between the State Department and the Pentagon, a great struggle about who would run post-war Iraq, and the Pentagon won that struggle. Now, the Pentagon strategy was deceptively simple as far as I can tell. I was several layers below the top. Basically their strategy was we would be showered with flowers and the Iraqis would welcome us and we would turn over power within weeks to an Iraqi government headed by Ahmad Chalabi and we would get out of Dodge. It wouldn't cost very much money. Clearly that strategy just sort of fell apart as reality set in. But the Pentagon didn't think it had to plan for lengthy reconstruction. They figured the Iraqis had oil money, the Iraqi government would be in charge, U.S. companies could come in and operate in a secure atmosphere, etcetera.

Q: There apparently was a story in a Philadelphia paper. I haven't seen it, but people told me about it. A reporter from the Inquirer, I think, the Philadelphia Inquirer, apparently had an interview with Wolfowitz and asked him what his ideas were, what his thoughts were, with regard to the outcome of our invasion of Iraq, and he said he would liken it to what Allied troops experienced in Paris in 1944, which is pretty much what you're describing: people throwing flowers at the troops and Chalabi in the guise of deGaulle coming in and getting the country going again. Obviously that hasn't happened.

DUNFORD: The sad thing is Iraqis really did welcome us for the most part. Iraqis had very high hopes when we came in, but because we weren't prepared, we weren't able to do it quickly, and we weren't able to do things like get the infrastructure up and running. Over time Iraqis became disappointed. Each Iraqi owed it to himself and to his family to decide whether it made more sense to cooperate with us or to cooperate with somebody else, the insurgents. Unfortunately, because of our incompetence, more and more Iraqis have made the decision that their interests don't lie with us.

Q: One of the questions they have here that we're supposed to ask—I don't happen to like it—says, "What advice would you pass on for future operations?" I don't like the question because I think all of these tend to be sui-generis. Do you want to take a stab at it?

DUNFORD: I think lessons learned—we should have learned these lessons long ago—from Iraq are, first of all, we need enough security not only to win the war but also to put the country back together again when we go to war. We obviously didn't prepare for the looting, and we need to prepare for that kind of eventuality if we're ever in the nation-building business again.

Communication lesson: I think I've said enough about that, but we have the technology to set up a communications system in fairly short order, and we should never again allow ourselves to be handicapped the way we were in Baghdad by bad communications.

De-Baathification: We've got to understand that most people in a thuggish regime like Saddam's are anxious for their careers, for their lives in some cases, and are not all committed ideologues. Again, I considered Saddam was such a thug and his two sons were such thugs that even people in the 55 deck of cards, I think, were operating out of fear most of the time. We simply just didn't acknowledge that.

Finally, we can't remake other countries in our own image in terms of democracy or capitalism or things like that. That should come naturally from the citizens of the country.

Q: No argument there. All right, well, I think we're going to wrap it up, David.

DUNFORD: Okay.

Q: Thank you so much for taking the time to do this. I wish you well.