

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

JOE RICE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interviewed by: Bernard Engel
Initial interview date: July 31, 2004
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Lt. Col. Rice is an Army Reserve Officer who lives in the Denver area. He was mobilized to the 308th Civil Affairs Brigade as a Civil Affairs Officer and arrived in Kuwait on March 31^s, 2003. His unit reached Baghdad in the second week of April, where he remained until March 9th, 2004. Lt. Col. Rice is the former Mayor of Glendale, Colorado and currently works for the Colorado Department of Transportation as the local government liaison. He has a BA in History and is close to completing his MPA. He was in Iraq just a few weeks shy of one year. He expects to return at some point.

Lt. Col. Rice was led to expect that his unit would support Fifth Corps in handling expected refugee flows, but such flows did not develop. Other than that, the unit had no defined mission on entering Iraq. He was assigned to a cultural affairs team even though he had no Arabic language capability and his area of expertise was government. He then began serving as a liaison between Fifth Corps and ORHA (Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance). However, given the flexibility of his assignment and his expertise, he became a part of the Baghdad Council's Working Group and began work on local government planning.

As a member of the working group, Lt. Col. Rice worked with personnel from the State Department, USAID, and Research Triangle Institute (RTI; a contractor). They based their planning on a two-page concept paper drawn up by RTI as part of their nationwide "local governance contract" with AID. There was no other guidance. Lt. Col. Rice and his team trained US soldiers in how to hold and conduct the caucuses needed to set up and select local councils for each the 88 neighborhoods and nine districts of Baghdad, as well as a city council for Baghdad itself. This training was accomplished through pilot programs and written guidelines.

Lt. Col. Rice's primary activity in Iraq was setting up neighborhood, district, and city councils. These efforts were reasonably effective despite the lack of any contingency planning by the US government geared toward such activities in post-war Iraq. He specifically notes a lack of available resources for the local governments and under-staffing/high turnover at the CPA. He briefly notes some of the negative impacts of deBaathification, included the alienation persons from the political process and the amputation of the pre-existing civil service. In spite of the problems, Lt. Col. Rice is guardedly optimistic about the future of Iraq.

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Q: This interview with Col. Joe Rice is being done on behalf of the U.S. Institute of Peace and the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training as part of the Iraqi Experience Project. I am Bernard Engel and I am going to be asking Colonel Rice to begin by just giving us some basic information about himself, his background, where he was born, some information perhaps about his education, his current employer, any relevant professional background to his activities in Iraq, his assignment in Iraq, his job and his location, and if he could tell us if he had any Iraqi assignment-specific training before he went over there and if he could tell us about his period of service in Iraq, whether he's going to be going back to do more work there or what his future plans are. So, Colonel Rice, if you will.

RICE: Please repeat that, the first series of questions there.

Q: Let's take it a step at a time. That's a lot to swallow. Perhaps you could begin just by telling us a little bit about yourself, where you're from, your background, your education, etcetera...

RICE: Well, I'm an Army Reserve officer. I live in the Denver, Colorado area. I have been in the Reserves for 19 years. I did three years on active duty. I've been a civil affairs officer for about two years, and that's the capacity in which I was mobilized to the 308 Civil Affairs Brigade and went to Iraq. In my civilian experience I've done training and consulting, employee development with MCI, J. D. Edwards, and Wells Fargo Bank. I'm currently employed—I just started the beginning of this month—with the State of Colorado working with the Department of Transportation as the local government liaison between the Colorado Department of Transportation and local governments around the state.

Prior to going to Iraq I was in local elected office. I was mayor of the City of Glendale, Colorado, which is a small city in the Denver metropolitan area, and was finishing up two terms there. I was in the last year of my second term when we got mobilized in the Army Reserve and sent to Iraq, so I went ahead and resigned since I was in the last year of my term and it was pretty clear we weren't going to come back. So I had some local government experience in Colorado.

Q: Did you have term limits?

RICE: Yeah, Colorado does have term limits. I was term limited in the last year of my second term.

Q: What's your academic background?

RICE: I have a bachelor's degree in history and I've been working for the last several years—it keeps getting interrupted—on my master's degree. I have six credit hours remaining in a master's of public administration.

Q: Can you tell us what your assignment was in Iraq and whether you had any specific training, either from your previous academic life or from the military, for that task, and what exactly did you do in Iraq and for what period of time?

RICE: Well, I'll kind of go through the story there. When we were first mobilized in the 308 Civil Affairs Brigade, the only real guidance or expectation that we had about what our mission would be was we were supporting Fifth Corps and that we were preparing mostly to handle the refugee flow. That's what my team was told and given the impression of, and that's what we focused our, I would say, limited preparations on, handling the refugee flow. Obviously when we got to Kuwait—we hit Kuwait on March 31st and the war had already been going on for several weeks—it was pretty clear already at that time that at least so far there wasn't a big refugee issue or a big humanitarian crisis and that, unless something drastically changed—at that point we were still wondering would Saddam use chemical weapons when the troops got within 50 miles of Baghdad—if that sort of thing had happened, then, of course, that probably would have resulted in a significant refugee flow, but that obviously did not happen.

By the time we started moving up to Baghdad around the second week of April, Coalition forces had already entered Baghdad. We were wondering even if they were going to send us home since we didn't have a defined mission yet. Portions of our unit had been parceled out, or people had been parceled out, to augment the staff at Fifth Corps or other places, but as far as a unit we still did not have a mission. We spent a couple of weeks at the airport, Baghdad Airport, and at that point we were doing a lot of finding our own missions, finding our own things to do, which entailed going out into Baghdad and doing assessments on various activities. There was another civil affairs brigade that was assigned to cover Baghdad, so in some ways we were on their turf and coordinated with them so they knew what we were doing, but we really were kind of making work.

Q: Let me go back. You talked about a potential refugee flow. What was the expectation, that this would be a flow of people out of Baghdad toward Kuwait or from the countryside into Baghdad?

RICE: It was humanitarian. It was really depending on, if and when, where chemical weapons were used, people would be leaving that particular area and going to others. Yes, there was concern, of course, that Kuwaitis and the Jordanians and pretty much everybody around Iraq, all the countries around Iraq, as we understand it, had beefed up their border security. They didn't want the refugees coming in. The intent was to provide for all the refugees still within Iraq, to create safe zones within Iraq so that they weren't crossing into Kuwait or that sort of thing. We didn't really do a lot of detailed training or preparation for that. It was just kind of broad brush, that if refugee flows start to happen, we'll start to handle it, and I don't really know what that meant.

Q: You had nothing on paper that said this is the plan, this is how we'll feed them, this is how we'll house them?

RICE: Not other than just broad brush it, "We'll coordinate with the humanitarian agencies". We never got any real detail, what we would do or how we would handle it. Basically it was an indication of things later to come. When we got into Baghdad, "Let's go make some of that democracy stuff."

Q: We're going to get to that in a minute. You're the second interviewee who has made mention of the fact that you in a sense had to go out and find work to do, that you didn't have a defined mission, defined program, defined kind of activities. Was it your feeling that this was, aside from the troops involved in combat, a general situation with the other support elements?

RICE: I think, as far as civil affairs brigades, that's my understanding from talking to other people. My only direct experience was with the 308, and I think we were unique in that we were told we were in support of Fifth Corps, which had basically the northern two-thirds of the country. The Marines at the time had the southern, Basrah, that area. But each of the divisions in the area also had their own civil affairs brigades that had civil affairs battalions. Even the civil affairs battalions that came under the 308 Civil Affairs Brigade were parceled out, were working for other people.

It seems to me it's a doctrinal issue of what role does a civil affairs brigade have anyway, because in peacetime it makes sense that the battalions report. When you have a brigade headquartered in the Chicago area and you have a battalion in Kansas City and a battalion up in Wisconsin and a battalion here, during peacetime the brigade oversees those battalions, approves their training plan, is their higher headquarters. But upon a mobilization, those battalions go in doctrinally; they work for divisions. What purpose does a brigade have, because the division commander wants that battalion working for him, reporting to him? The brigade was always trying to figure out what its role was with the battalions and in some cases tried to task the battalions for information on others, but the battalions are responsive to the guy whom they are working and living with, which is the division commander.

Q: I may have mentioned this, but what was your period of service in Iraq?

RICE: We arrived in Kuwait on March 31st, crossed into Iraq, and took a few days to get up to Baghdad the second week of April. I left Baghdad on March 9th [of] the next year.

Q: You were there approximately a year.

RICE: Yeah, and went back to Kuwait for a few weeks and then back to the United States.

Q: And you're heading back, do I understand?

RICE: Well, no, not that I know of.

Q: Oh, okay, I think Miss Coyne is going back.

RICE: Yeah, she's going back in a civilian capacity. Now, just looking ahead, this is an interesting thing that I've been waiting for official word, even been asking people for even indications, but I was just at my unit last month or last weekend—a couple weekends ago we had our first drill back, the first time the whole unit was together again since we deployed—and still nobody said anything about we need to start at looking at going maybe in about a year.

If you just simply do the math of how many troops are over there right now, how many civil affairs troops are over there right now, how many civil affairs troops there are in the inventory, and you do that math, we were the first rotation in, the second rotation is there now, the third rotation is going to be leaving in October or November, they're going to fill it but they were having trouble filling it. Well, there's going to be a rotation four, so who do you have left for rotation four? Certainly you're going to have some new people who've come into the units, but pretty much the base is going to be the people who were in rotation one. Even if they cut the number of troops in half, then you just simply say, "Okay, well, maybe now we're not going to be pegged for a year, but it will be a year and a half or two years."

Q: Let's start to get a little specific. In the area where you worked, describe, if you can, the various levels of government, how they were organized during Saddam's regime, and if you could then perhaps talk a little bit about the relations between the provincial and local governments with the central authority, ethnic representation—this is going to get long, but we'll go back—mandates, authority, jurisdiction, funding, relations with citizens, and public attitude.

RICE: Let me bridge a little bit before, where we were and this question.

Q: By all means, you go.

RICE: It kind of gets to the whole 'what are we doing there?' Initially one of the things that just killed me is I'm in a civil affairs brigade and the brigade has functional teams, at least doctrinally. In other words, there's a public facilities team, there's an economic and commerce team, there's a government team, and there's a cultural affairs team, a special functions team (which covers cultural affairs). I was initially assigned as a cultural affairs officer. I have ten years' local government experience, there's a government team and I'm assigned as cultural affairs officer.

Q: It's a good time to ask the question: Do you speak Arabic?

RICE: I don't.

Q: And yet they're assigning you to cultural affairs with no language capability.

RICE: It gets back to, again, the kind of big, broad brush thing. This is epidemic in a lot of the other units, from things that I was told. Civil affairs, I think, just structurally likes to make it out that we're these functional experts with these functional expert teams and we have this language capability, and those things are really, for the most part, doctrinal myth. Our government team in the civil affairs brigade does have some law enforcement slots in there and people are supposed to be experts in that area. The whole government team was basically made up of police officers. The public administration guy was a police officer. With the exception of a few people like Mark Yanaway and Heather Coyne, people don't speak the language either. So they were just putting people in slots.

Had I had to do any of these duties of cultural affairs.... I think, again, it's the same for most of the civil affairs people. Other than just a little bit of civilian experience that we all tend to have, I think the skill sets in a civil affairs unit is only slightly higher perhaps than the skill sets you get in any other type of reserve unit, because everybody has a civilian occupation. I think that's kind of a myth.

I'm getting a little bit off track of what the important points are, but, again, for the first couple weeks we were there when we were going out doing these missions, we were going out to assess the zoo and the national museum and some Olympic facilities and looking at damage assessments, contacting the Iraqis that were there about what the situation was and what they might need to rebuild or just finding out what was there and reporting it up. That whole reporting chain, by the way, is another whole issue. Facilities were assessed repeatedly.

My roommate was an engineer, and he did some water treatment plants and other things. He assessed them even still during some of the combat operations. He was pulled up early to do some of these things, and later you go back to look for where the assessments are and they were gone. They supposedly fired them off on this groove and they went off into the atmosphere somewhere. Who knows whatever happened with them.

Anyway, now we're towards the end of April, and I'd been doing these assessments, which was interesting because we got to get out in the streets and talk to the people. But then our unit got the assignment to send several people to, at the time, ORHA, the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance.

Q: That was Jay Garner's operation?

RICE: Right, Jay Garner's group. Later then, of course, it became the Coalition for Provincial Authority. The unit, 308th again, was supporting Fifth Corps and Fifth Corps wanted to send some liaison officers in each of the three pillars of ORHA, Reconstruction, Humanitarian Assistance, and was it Governance...

Q: It would have been Security.

RICE: No, I don't believe. That's one I'm going to have to go back and remember. I think it was Civil Administration [ORHA's three pillars were Reconstruction, Humanitarian Assistance, and Civil Administration].

Q: That would be like Governance, I guess.

RICE: Yeah, because that was my original title, Civil Administration Liaison. The reason for Fifth Corps doing this was in many ways to start coordinating. The Fifth Corps was getting tasked a lot by ORHA to provide security for humanitarian escorts or just to do various things, and they wanted to try to anticipate requirements that were coming down from ORHA and try to shape them so that we didn't get requests for an aviation lift to go survey power lines 12 hours before they wanted it to happen. So they sent us down to ORHA to work as liaison officers for Fifth Corps. Again, the first couple of days and weeks down there was spent responding to RFI, Requests For Information, from Fifth Corps and tasks came from ORHA, but again it was a lot of defining your own job, figuring out what needed to be done and doing it.

I remember spending several days just walking around the palace meeting the various people that were coming in from USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and State and others and trying to figure out what it was they needed to have done and what they were doing that would impact Fifth Corps and what could I do to help shape what they did. That was also interesting because you'd go around to these ministries, these places that are supposed to be in charge of the various ministries, and in some cases it was only two or three people and they hadn't gone outside the palace yet and they're supposed to be in charge of the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, but they hadn't gone out and contacted any Iraqis yet and they didn't know anything about the ministries. It was pretty interesting. In the course of that I got to know some folks from USAID and State, and, kind of condensing it, as they got to know me: "Oh, you have ten years' local government experience," and—they were going to be working on forming the Baghdad Council—"Would you like to get involved with that?"

Q: This would have been roughly April-May, May-June?

RICE: This was the first two weeks of May.

Q: Okay, so combat was pretty much over by that point.

RICE: Yeah, the active combat was declared over May first.

Q: All right, I just kind of wanted to get a timeline.

RICE: So the first couple weeks of May was spent bouncing around ORHA as a liaison for Fifth Corps, but around mid-May I was asked to be part of the Baghdad Council's Working Group, which consisted of Andy Morrison from the State Department, Chris Milligan[PH] from USAID, and myself primarily, and then others would end up coming in later—oh, and a contractor from Research Triangle Institute, RTI, which had the local governance contract.

Q: What do you mean by the local governance contract? What were they supposed to do?

RICE: They were awarded a contract by USAID to advise and consult on developing local government throughout Iraq and other things. They had civil society development aspects as well. At this point RTI had written a two-page paper, and the author of the paper was a PhD, and they'd done local government consulting around the world. They had a two-page concept paper that they developed. I understand it was developed somewhat in conjunction with Iraqi exiles and also through their academic research, their experiences. They had already made contact with essentially the top guy still in Baghdad municipal government, who later became known as Deputy Mayor Faris Abdul Razak, and he was essentially the top guy in Baghdad city administration who was still left after the Baathists had fled or whatever.

Q: Let me ask you a question. This two-page concept paper, how would you characterize that in terms of your planning? Was that the basic document that you guys were going to work from, or was there anything else that had been prepared in advance?

RICE: Everything was just kind of ad hoc. That was the basis of it, and that's one of the things that astounded me, that there were many things later on that I thought easily could have been anticipated prior to the war. Yes, you might have had to have changed it. You could have developed it much better. For instance, we knew we were going to go in there and essentially work to create a more decentralized—get rid of the regime—and one of the elements of the regime was a very top-down system.

I thought the concept paper was excellently written and for two pages it had a lot of punch to it as far as developing a council system from the ground up, involving the Iraqis so it wasn't a

Coalition-appointed council. It wouldn't be based on elections, obviously, because that was impractical for a number of reasons, but the essence of the concept paper was in the 88 or so neighborhoods of Baghdad, which range in population size anywhere from 20,000 to up to 300,000, Baghdad being a city of five and a half million people, they understood that in Baghdad, like most other places, people associated themselves by neighborhoods and these had historically kind of defined boundaries and that sort of thing, but going through a caucus process where people in the neighborhoods would come to a meeting to discuss forming their own local council, what their council would do, and then they would choose representative to be the neighborhood council members in a caucus method, which is a time-honored democratic method. It's not full-blown elections but it is still them doing it.

Then from there, once you have this done in the 88 neighborhoods—the 88 neighborhoods are, again, historically grouped into nine districts—the Arabic term is “belladia” [PH]—and then have each of the 88 neighborhood councils select a couple of representatives up to the district council, and then the nine district councils have each of them select representatives up to the city council, which is ultimately what ended up happening and, frankly, for all its problems and difficulties, worked very well.

Again, similarly going back to when we were looking at forming these councils, some of the things that, I think, could have been done better in anticipation of this—it was a good philosophical approach, a broad-brush approach—one of the biggest problems with it was who's going to implement this grand vision. It fell to the soldiers obviously. The USAID people and the RTI contractors never came in, ever, in the numbers that they were anticipated, for a variety of reasons, and they certainly weren't there in any numbers early enough to really implement the system. Through the course of May we got in Doctor Amal Rassam, who's an Iraqi expatriate—she lived there early in her life, and she now teaches anthropology at the University of New York, and she was fabulous—and several other people that were RTI contractors to help implement this system. We also were augmented by June with members of the IRDC, Iraqi Reconstruction and Development Council, also Iraqi expatriates who were hired as Department of Defense (DoD) contractors to come back and work in various capacities.

We had this great concept paper, and that's again where Andy and others brought me in or asked for my involvement because I could talk both languages. I understood what they were trying to do from a local government standpoint and actually could add value in that. This is one of the things I joked with them about, especially when they asked me to start writing a guidebook for Baghdad councils and such and how the local government would operate. My city in Glendale, Colorado is 5,000; Baghdad is five and a half million. A little difference in scale and how cities operate, but I guess fundamentally I kind of understood the concept.

Q: What was the relationship? You talk about the neighborhoods, then the district, and then up to the kind of “city council”, the term you used. What was the relationship of that to what was

called the Iraqi Governing Council that Colonel Yanaway spoke about? Was one subordinate to the other? Were they kind of parallel?

RICE: Well, the IGC, the Iraqi Governing Council, was the national-level group, and the Baghdad City Council is a municipal government. Now, it's the municipal government of the capital city, which also happens to have in this case a quarter of the population of the entire country. I know I'm skipping around.

Q: That's okay. Don't worry about that.

RICE: I was kind of getting to the things I thought we could easily have foreseen, and in some cases—I really need to find a copy—was the Future of Iraq project by the State Department. I've seen elements of it, but I really want to sit and read that thing through.

Q: There's a lot of talk about it.

RICE: I understand that many of these things were covered in that, or at least addressed in that. One of the big problems we had was we were going out in these 88 neighborhoods—I'm trying to figure out which parts of this I need to fill in. My job, again, was to take this concept and ultimately train the soldiers in the units that were responsible for the areas in Baghdad on how to conduct these meetings, because the three or four of us could not go out and conduct 88 neighborhood meetings. We went out and conducted a few as a pilot projects, but eventually what ended up happening was I wrote a training program for the captains, lieutenants and sergeants that were going to go out in these 88 neighborhoods and conduct these meetings to select these councils. That's probably one thing that could have been done in advance, as we should have known we were going to have to train people to do this sort of thing. We had this grand vision but, again, who was going to implement and how it was going to be implemented, the details, weren't even thought of.

Out in these neighborhoods, though, the other thing that could have been foreseen is the demographics. We didn't even know how many neighborhoods there were. We would go to the city and ask them for maps and ask the people who were there. It was a very centralized government in the past. They didn't have neighborhood councils or anything before. For whatever reason, I think people really didn't know. Just like many other things, like censuses and everything, the former government cooked the books to over-count Sunni, undercut Shia, etcetera, etcetera.

Then you went around the neighborhoods. I started thinking about this going into the Denver metro area, where I'm from. People associate themselves with neighborhoods, but if you were to come up and ask me, "Where's the boundary between neighborhood X in Denver and neighborhood Y?" some people might describe it as, "Well, it's pretty much Colorado Boulevard." People describe it differently. We were trying to find maps, that are in Arabic, by

the way, and, yeah, there were translators, but it's just an extra level of complexity to translate this map. Somebody spends hours translating it, and then you find out it's a map from 1960 and doesn't really apply anymore or this thing changed. Things that seemed simple are just hard. We had a phrase that our office ended up using for months: it was EISFA, "Everything Is So Frigging Hard". Everything was hard. Then, of course, you got to these neighborhoods.

Our role, again, as I mentioned, was we wanted the Iraqis, the neighborhood, as much as possible, to participate in selecting their council, because that's the only way. The RTI paper covered it expertly. That's how to get them invested in it, rather than a Coalition guy coming in and going, "You, you and you, you're on the council." They have more legitimacy; they're more connected to the people, etcetera, etcetera.

Our role in that was also, since you can't have elections yet or there's not a formal census, we wanted the neighborhood councils to be roughly representative of the neighborhood. Of course, when you have a caucus, people over in Iraq will do what people in the United States do at caucuses: you try to pack the caucus so your side wins, which may not necessarily be representative of the neighborhood. Well, there were some things that were fairly obviously, like we were trying to promote the involvement of women, which in some neighborhood councils was very easy to do because the neighborhood was very cosmopolitan or the community leadership was just very much supportive of it or whatever, and in other neighborhoods it was incredibly difficult. We had some we'd go in and they'd say, "If you bring women into this meeting, we're walking out." But there were other places where it was very hard. Again, if we wanted to be roughly representative of the population, it kind of helps if you know what the population is.

How do you know what the population is when you're an American who's been in the country for a month and doesn't speak Arabic? Well, you ask people and you look at maps. You can't trust anything you could find from the former regime, even if you could find anything, although we kind of did find some things that gave us some ideas. It's pretty obvious that places like Sadr City are majority Shia and in other neighborhoods it was kind of obvious, but you're dealing with population sizes of 20,000 or 30,000 or 300,000 and you don't even know what the boundary is yet. Different people have different opinions on the boundaries. You might find a map that shows very clear boundaries, but the map is 10 years old and there's been a lot of growth, and people say, "No, now we view ourselves as two neighborhoods," or where it says it's two neighborhoods, "We really view ourselves as one neighborhood."

Then you start talking to people: "What's the Kurdish population here?" Sometimes for the most benevolent, truthful reasons and others for the most manipulative reasons, people will give you different answers. "No, there are no Kurds in this neighborhood, so don't put any Kurds on the council," or "This neighborhood is 80 percent Shia, so it's okay of the council is all Shia.

Q: But surely there had to have been sources of information through the State Department, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), think tanks. Iraq has not been some isolated island

somewhere for the past 10 years. People, academics, etcetera, have been looking at Iraq and studying it. Was there any effort made to mine these potential sources of information that would help? It couldn't have gotten you some of your questions, but it would have at least given you some maybe decent maps.

RICE: Yeah, you'd think that.

Q: I'm simply asking. So you know of no particular effort that was made other than maybe what one or two of you might have done personally, no institutional efforts?

RICE: If there was, it wasn't given to us. Andy Morrison from the State Department—I don't know if you guys have him on your list or not, but you really probably should—was a State Department Foreign Service Officer. He worked the Iraq Desk for several years, and he was one the guy who was on this team kind of leading this effort. He was the best source of this kind of knowledge, and I would have thought also, if it was out there anywhere, that was the best we had. There were dozens of meetings over the course of the year, and, of course, in this phase there were a lot earlier on, of sitting around a map—and he speaks some Arabic; he's good but he's certainly not native—with Iraqis and drawing boundaries trying to figure out the map, trying to figure out the boundaries and the demographics. Again, that's one thing I thought we could have done a lot better.

Another thing that we could have done better is understanding—you ask here how the system was organized during Saddam's regime. I think Andy probably had the best grasp of it, but he's a very kind of intellectual type. It would have been nice to have a handbook or a paper or something that I could have read. Again, it seems so simple to just go out and ask some people, but you just kind of get different views, and there's the terminology in Arabic and English.

It took a long time for me to kind of understand, one, what kind of system were we trying to set up—and this was done in conjunction with Iraqis—and how a country with a federal police force, for instance—I'm not familiar with that kind of system. I'm familiar with a system where in the Denver metropolitan area with 50 cities and counties in the Denver metropolitan area you have 50 local law enforcement agencies. As a mayor, if I had issues with my police force, I could call my police chief or talk to my police chief, and we had oversight authority. We set their budget. It would have been nice to have kind of a synopsis of how the system was set up prior. Again, that kind of information is probably out there somewhere, but how do you find it and do you have the time to find it when you're working these 18-hour days trying to get these 88 caucuses set up.

You need to have a council, one, so the local military knows who to communicate with in the neighborhood. There's pressure from above: let's get a democratic council selected so we can have a public PR victory to tout, and functionally.

You do have internet access and stuff, but in the beginning it was very limited, so how do find this kind of information? I went out and found some Iraqis. When somebody says, "I was the governor 20 years ago of this province," what does that mean? Is it "governor" in my terms? When I think of a governor, I think a governor has certain capabilities and powers. You ask them, "How was the system set up before? How did local governments relate to the national government? What was done? How was the bureaucracy structured? How was service delivery provided? Who picks up the trash? Who sets that budget?"

Q: It would seem to me—some of my questions may sound simplistic, but I ask them simply to kind of give you a platform then to take off on—that it's one thing to go in and change the regime, but even in Germany after World War II, I think, when the war was over, my reading indicates we did take a look and see, well, we want to de-Nazify the country, but on the other hand there are some structures here that, if we destroy, the whole country's going to go down the tube, so we have to maintain some of the institutions that even the Nazi government had put in place, at least for a while.

RICE: And officials.

Q: And officials, at least so we don't have total anarchy on our hands. Was there some thought given to that?

RICE: I don't think so. I've been asked, since I came back, to speak to a number of Rotaries and Kiwanises and universities. I've given a lot of presentations, actually, on Iraq and I kind of have a set presentation I give. Still, even after being back for several months after being there a year, I don't think I've really sat down and analyzed and thought a lot of these things out myself as to what happened, why it happened, what we could have done better. I guess I'm kind of spewing to you raw information and I'm still in my presentation, but that's one of identified things that are well out of my lane, but my opinions are and what I got from the councils....

That's one of the things I really enjoyed: I got to interact with real Iraqi citizens four, five or six times a week on a regular basis for almost a year. Obviously, people who are vehemently anti-Coalition I'm not going to get a chance to talk to, but the people—and some people are very critical of the Coalition—I got a chance to talk to from their perspectives and that sort of thing too.

One of the big elements that I heard from Iraqis, I heard from people in CPA and the military, and was my experience and my just general thought processes: when the de-Baathification order came out in mid-May, I don't think we realized what the hell we were doing, because the de-Baathification order included, among other officials, every single school teacher in the country.

Q: That was my point.

RICE: That was really not practical, but then what else did we do? Among the 400 and some thousand—again, I'm getting a lot of this from Iraqis as well; it's all corroborated—we gave the impression to a huge element of the population that they had no role in the new Iraq. If we had done something instead of saying, "The Iraqi military is completely disbanded," if we had done something like, "Show back up to your barracks or to the central point; we'll take down your name and all that sort of thing; bring in your credentials"—because everybody had ID cards—"we'll pay you a pension immediately so you can provide for your family; and we will go through a process to identify who the bad people are, who the people with blood on their hands are, that sort of thing," Of course, most of them are going to self-select anyway; they won't show up. But instead you give the impression that you have no role in the future Iraq, and what do we think a portion of those people are going to do? Well, now we're kind off back again.

Q: That's all right. Let me just keep you on this tack for a moment. As you guys were trying to develop this neighborhood/district council level, what was the input or were there any pressures from the Iraqi exiles who came back, the Chalabis, etcetera, to try and take over and infiltrate themselves into that? Other interviewees have told us that certainly at the national level they were pushing. Was there a similar effort at this level?

RICE: Maybe there were things that could have been done better, but all in all I think that a lot of people didn't really pay attention to the council systems at first, when we were out there forming these councils. I don't think they understood, and there's still a question of how influential it will be, but they certainly became more influential than I think anybody had realized, because political parties really didn't pay attention at the beginning, at least not to my visibility.

Now, I knew many of the council members were active in political parties, people who ended up being selected to the councils, but it didn't seem to me that the caucuses in which these councils were selected were packed with political party members. There were some efforts, like with Muqtad al-Sadr's group and others, but not political parties per se. Even amongst the council members who were in political parties—and this was one of the things that I tried to stress, and I think they kind of naturally took hold of—local government isn't really partisan and it shouldn't be partisan, so even if you're a member of the Dawa Party or SCIRI (Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq) or others, which some of them were, they functioned as nonpartisan local elected officials. I'm a product of my experience in local government in Colorado which is nonpartisan. You don't run with Democrat or Republican by your name at the municipal level in Colorado, and I think that functions pretty well.

Now, later on, especially when the 15 November agreement first came out that talked about how the local councils were going to have a role in selecting—the plan got scrapped ultimately—the provincial caucuses which were going to select the transitional national assembly, and the councils essentially were going to select 10 out of the 15 delegates, then we started to get political party involvement more. One of the other things is the IRDC folks...

Q: IRDC?

RICE: Iraqi Reconstruction and Development Council: these were the DoD contractors, most of them came out of, I understand, the INC (Iraqi National congress) and those kinds of groups, [Iraqi] National Accord (INA) and others. Now, many of them, I never picked up a partisan twang to their activities. Some of them had a great partisan twang, and frankly—Heather and I were just talking about it at breakfast—there was one guy who supposedly worked for us, worked for Andy Morrison and us working on the council, kind of a media guy, we hardly ever saw. He was a good, decent guy, but he was out there most of the time working political activities.

Q: This was an Iraqi local?

RICE: An Iraqi expat, and he actually subsequently put in his application and tried to be named as Baghdad governor. He was being paid 90 to 100 thousand dollars a year by the U.S. government as a hired DC contractor, but what was he doing with most of his time and effort? Again, a good, decent guy but just...

Q: Got off the track.

RICE: Yeah, he was working for his political party. That's not my experience with most of them, but nonetheless it was my experience with him.

Q: A quick factual question: Did you feel you had enough funding and support to do the things that you needed to do?

RICE: I just wrote down that I wanted to make sure I get this point in. It gets down to, again, the big concept of we're going to create these local governments. Great! But, you know, when you create 88 neighborhood councils, again the populations of the neighborhoods these councils represent range in size from 20,000 to 300,000. Most are probably in the 50,000-60,000 range. That's bigger than the size of most of the local governments in Colorado. Obviously you have the big [jurisdictions], Denver and some of the other bigger cities, but frankly my city was 5,000 and we had a staff of 100.

We had 5,000 residents but we provided services, because we gained population during the day with a lot of office parks and that sort of thing, for 40,000 people. Nonetheless, okay, let's say, for a city of 40,000 people we had a staff of 100. There was no thought, zero thought, given to resourcing these councils in any way, shape or form.

Early on, somebody said, "Hey, we ought to find a place for these little councils to meet. They ought to be able to get a room in a library or, you know, there are former Baath Party government

buildings all around the city and they should get some of these to be the council hall." Baghdad is one city, but under the system we set up—and again this is how people identified—it's really 88 cities that form a metro area. So RTI and others got some grants to refurbish council halls. This was another sign of success of the councils, how legitimate they became.

Again, even in neighborhoods of 20,000, the largest caucus I went to maybe had a couple thousand people in it, and most of them had maybe 40, 50, 60, 70. It was still as involved as it could and they represented, but there were still many people later on, weeks and months down the road, who said, "Well, I didn't know," or "I missed my opportunity to get involved in the councils." We tried to say there will be future elections and that sort of thing. The point is the councils became quite legitimate.

Even NGOs and the Japanese government and others were bouncing around Baghdad, and a lot of people, groups and organizations naturally just started to find their way to the neighborhood council. Norwegian People's Aid would go to the council in Aadhamya and say, "Hey, we're going to fix up a rec center. You tell us how to do it." So the councils became kind of the go-to places. The Japanese and others were bouncing around, going into the neighborhood councils, saying, "What do you need?" and the councils would say, "We need an office, we need computers." The Japanese in five or 10 council neighborhoods built their council halls.

[END SIDE]

Like I said, my city has 100 [employees]. Of course, the majority of those are police and fire, which are provided by, in this case, national government. And then they have computers to type minutes, to do other things that we want them to do.

We're telling them that, as they go through to discuss what their reconstruction priorities are or how to regulate street vendors to get the vendors out of the streets that block traffic, and all these other boring, miniscule things that local governments do that are the basis upon which a civil and orderly society is based, they should hold public hearings. Instead of just arbitrarily deciding that they're going to close this street off to merchants, they should take some time and go through some public processes and have a little debate about is that right thing to do or, if we've got to do it, which areas in our neighborhood should we set aside for merchants, and should we try to get an NGO to build a little merchants' plaza, which street should we clear the merchants out of so that it can be used for traffic, who's going to be positively impacted by this option and negatively impacted by that option, and then let's develop some options and put a notice out to the public and say we're going to talk about it, invite the public to a meeting, have some public comment, and then make a decision.

Well, these [activities] take bureaucratic administrative resources to do. They need somebody to type the minutes to post on the board so the public knows what the council's doing, to advertise

the meeting, and we didn't give them any of these physical resources, like the computers. Everything was an afterthought.

And then you get to the big one: institutional development. I mentioned earlier that the initial instructions really to the soldiers were: "Okay, captain, you're in charge of this neighborhood. Go make a council. Go make some democracy." The soldier, the captain/lieutenant/sergeant, is a bright guy, he maybe went to West Point or he is a Reservist and has some civilian experience, he has lived in a local government democracy but doesn't know that much about it, or the active-duty guy who was an infantry guy and is now in charge of the neighborhood: you tell him to close with and destroy the enemy or to set up an ambush or to conduct a passage of lines or conduct a raid, and he would go to his tactics, techniques and procedure manual, step one, step two: "These are the things I need to do." "Okay, captain, go make some democracy." "I don't have that in my manual." That's one of the first things that I did: wrote and conducted this training for these guys.

Well, the instructions to these councils were: "Okay, you've formed a council. Now Bremer and others can go, 'Okay, local government in Baghdad, check.'" But, now the instructions to them are: "Okay, be a council."

Even in the United States with well developed local government institutions and traditions, even when you have an election there... There was a big deal in Denver a few years ago because term limits finally kicked in and something like nine of the 13 Denver City Council members were going to be new, and people said, "Oh, it's going to be a big loss of institutional knowledge and how they do things."

Here, throughout these 88 neighborhoods, nine districts, and one city council, not to mention, by the way, the rest of the province and the cities and towns and neighborhood councils and everything that was created outside of the City of Baghdad but still in Baghdad Province, we had over 1,500 local council members, all new, at the same time with little to no resources and no historical basis of local government. So little things, like how do you prepare agendas, what's the process you go through to involve the public in things, what is the role of local government, how does local government relate to the national government: none of these things were thought out, and we had to kind of develop them on the fly.

Q: Weren't there enough Iraqi expats or perhaps Iraqi academics who weren't Baath Party members who could advise, who could say, "Look we've never had open council meetings, we've never had a system of advising the public, calling for public comment. This is very un-Iraqi. We don't do things this way." You say you were the cultural affairs officer. I don't expect you to have known this, but weren't there individuals or institutions, either expatriate or local, that could have become involved in this?

RICE: Well, I think there were, but you're trying to create a brand new system figuring it out as you go, all of us were. This, again, is one of the things. How does the city council relate to the ministries? You came from a highly centralized system and you're trying to create a decentralized system, but you can't just move from one to the other instantaneously.

Some of it you're just probably never going to move to, like the police is probably always going to be a national police force. Well, there are democracies that have national police forces, but it wasn't something I was familiar with.

The councils didn't, of course, have the capacity to supervise a police force if they were given that authority. They didn't really understand budget and contracting, when local governments let contracts. They're smart, intelligent—from my experience, the council members—well meaning people. For the most part, the neighborhoods selected very intelligent, professional people who kind of intellectually understand democracy. It's something that I didn't even realize—there are just so many nuances—to give the rules on paper the meaning and how do you implement them.

Again, the whole government system was not developed, and I understand that you want the Iraqis to develop it, so I don't think we should have or could have developed how the local governments there relate to the national government and all that sort of thing prior, but I thought we could have given it some thought so we could kind of guide the discussions. You want the Iraqis, obviously, to figure this out themselves; [but] you can't impose it. There was just no, even, understanding of what some of the issues might be, and at least we could have identified those to guide the Iraqis. Again, I'm trying not to be controlling, but some of these things just needed to be defined and they just weren't.

Q: Another interviewee, a rather senior person, civilian, not military, indicated that she felt the whole process was ideologically driven. In other words, rather than make the best out of what we had, we're going to turn Iraq into a functioning Western-style democracy and we're going to do it now, that there was this ideology driving everything rather than a more analytical approach that would have said this may or may not work for the Iraqis, maybe we ought to let them figure out how best to run their own country. How would you react to that?

RICE: My response to that is maybe it was broad-brush ideological but I almost think it would have been somewhat better to go in there and impose a system: "Here's how it's going to be. Now, you can work through and change it." But it wasn't even thought out. We didn't even go in there and impose a Western-style democracy. We were kind of, I think, caught in that trap of, well, we want to let them figure it out for themselves so they have ownership, but, on the other hand, when they were isolated and had no tradition of these local governments and that sort of thing, you can't just say, "Well, you figure it out."

It gets into the institutional capacity ability. There are things I thought we should have done right away that we're still struggling even right now to do. Certainly the United States has, and I

know of other countries that have, municipal associations that do things like provide training and resources for local elected officials, have conferences of local elected officials where they can discuss best practices and that sort of thing. Frankly, like in the United States with the National League of Cities, which has essentially independent chapters in every state, like there's a Colorado Municipal League and others, that do these sorts of things and also function to lobby the national government and to counterbalance the national government in some things, they need some local government institutional capacity ability in Iraq, both to train and develop local elected officials.

When people are first elected to a local council in Colorado, through the Colorado Municipal League they have opportunities to go for: "Here's what your role as a council member is, here's how the state and local governments interact, here's how highway funding works, learning the system, and some of it is leadership training." They need that sort of thing in Iraq as well, and there are some people, even the local councils, trying to press that.

One of the things that also is happening right now is the new national government, and it happened over the past year too, even with CPA. Every level of government seems to think that they have the answer for everything and so they want all the power and decisions to be made there. For the first time in Iraq's history, there's an expectation of local government now. They truly intellectually understand it, but the national government is trying to suck up all the decisions again and all the resources and be the controller of local governments and go back to a centralized system.

Q: How about the religious divisions, the Sunni-Shia divide and the Kurdish divide from the Sunni and Shia? How did that impact on your efforts to set up these councils?

RICE: You know, I think one of the issues early on was it was difficult in some places to get Sunnis to come out to these community meetings. I don't know if they felt intimidated because the Shia were obviously very much enthusiastic about the whole thing. They identified early on that this was their opportunity. Some of the Sunni, I think, of course, felt, or at least thought, that we might think that they were stained by Saddam Hussein. The Kurds came out as well; that didn't seem to be an issue.

Frankly it's almost like redistricting here in the United States. When you're trying to allocate seats on the neighborhood council or such, the divisions tend to come out more there, but once the selection was done, I guess it didn't even really seem to me to be a huge problem.

Once we could get to understand what the demographics were in the neighborhood, when we told the councils, "We don't want you to set quotas," or "We're not going to set a quota for you, but your council needs to be roughly representative of the population of the neighborhood, and we understand this neighborhood to be 60 percent Shia, 30 percent Sunni and 10 percent Kurd. If

you're going to have 10 people on the council, that's about what it should look like. In other words, if you have a council with no Sunni on it, we're going to make you do it again."

Frankly, I was very surprised that I didn't see more sectarian divisions. As a matter of fact, I didn't see any on the city council. There were Sunnis and Shias voting together. They seemed to like and value [it], and they even would openly talk about it. Sometimes people think there are these differences, but there just weren't. At the local level it just really certainly wasn't an issue.

Q: We're still talking essentially about greater Baghdad here. We're not talking about other parts of the country. Were there other people like you doing this kind of work in the other major cities around the country?

RICE: There wasn't a uniform plan for how to form councils, and what we saw often, by the way, very early was CPA would put out edicts one way or another and they were ignored or the word never even got out to the places. Bremer put out these orders several times: "Don't conduct elections. Nothing should be called an election." Well, there were military guys in places that would say, "Okay, we're holding an election." They either ignored it or didn't get the word.

Local governments were formed differently in other places. RTI had the nationwide contract, and they in many ways used things from our experiences in Baghdad elsewhere in the country. The caucus process ended up being refined and used elsewhere in the country at points later. Now, there were also some councils that were formed earlier than ours. Some were formed in a similar way that just happened because that's the way somebody thought it made sense.

I know Mosul, for instance, also formed their council—the general, General Petraeus formed their council—and they started at the top. General Petraeus surveyed the Iraqi community to get some notables, but then it was ultimately still him who selected them. They formed their council based on ethnic division; there were going to be 10 seats for this and 5 seats for these guys and whatever. I guess he did let them select their own people, but it was kind of top down. Then later on the people up in Mosul, the CPA person asked for our processes that we used in May because they then wanted to start and form neighborhood councils as well. Well, they formed their city council and then formed their neighborhood councils, whereas we formed it up, but it took a couple of months. So it happened in different places.

I know also that—getting back to being a council—in July, based on some references from Colorado and other things, I wrote a handbook for the Baghdad council members, and that handbook RTI distributed other places around the country, and it included things like agenda formats, a little bit about the role of the local elected official, what's in their lane and what's not in their lane, rules of procedure for a meeting.

Q: When I interviewed Colonel Yanaway—of course, his focus was more on the next level up, the National Governing Council—he talked a little bit about the need to provide security for the people that served on that governing council. Was that an issue that you had to confront with people at this level? Were they concerned about their own security?

RICE: Yeah, it became more of an issue as time went on, actually. There were some issues early on, but for the most part, even at these community meetings and such, security was an issue, both, in some cases, because not everybody would come out to the meetings in the early days, like women particularly in some neighborhoods, just because of the security situation. There were some people who were afraid to come out or who were afraid to serve on councils. Threats kind of started among some of the council members pretty early: if you work with the councils, you're just a pawn of the Coalition, etcetera, etcetera. I think it was several months before the threats started and before maybe the first council members were killed, neighborhood and district council members.

Now, sometimes it's hard to say whether they were killed because they were on the council or because they were somebody who had some influence in the neighborhood, which is why they got on the council, and they got killed because of a personal or whatever vendetta. But it seemed like the people that were threatened and killed in the beginning were—don't know for sure—probably more for other reasons, but later on, especially in the September, October, November, December timeframe, was when there did get to be some threats against people and there was some violence against council members that appeared to be because they were council members.

Q: Did you make efforts to provide security for them?

RICE: Ultimately, the 37 city council members were afforded the opportunity to hire two bodyguards, and they all did, and they were all friends or relatives, which is also who I would trust my life to probably more. We only had one city council member resign because of threats.

I still talk to people in Baghdad on a weekly basis, both council members and Coalition people. All the council members have cell phones, and they can call me for free and I can call them for the price of a U.S. long-distance call. I talk to several of them routinely.

About six weeks ago or so, there appeared to be the first real deliberate widespread targeting of council members, and it was the district council members that seemed to be targeted because there were three or four district council members that were killed across Baghdad and several others that had near misses and that sort of thing, and one of the city council members, her house was sprayed with gunfire and her brother was killed, so she's got these huge guilt issues now and she's not sure if she's going to continue on the city council, and who can blame her. That's also one of the tragedies, because she's one of the brightest and she's a person that they really need on the council to develop this system.

But, again, local elected officials being closest to the people, being selected out of the neighborhoods, I think most of them had legitimacy in their neighborhoods to the degree that the neighborhoods pretty much kept them safe.

There were constant calls for district council members to get security as well, but it also became just simply a function of budget too. You can provide two bodyguards at 60 bucks a month for city council members because there are 37 of them. If you go down to the 400 and some district council members, it becomes a budget issue.

Then—and this is where you had to really make some tough decisions—we started to do it on a case-by-case basis, but with bodyguards over there it was always a tough call. Are they legitimately needed for this person, are they needed just because he's looking for a way to provide a couple of jobs for friends and family members, and/or is he or she looking for it because it's kind of a status symbol too? "I'm important. I need bodyguards." You know, it's really amazing that in some cases it fell to me and others to make the decision, and it's hard. You don't know whether you're killing somebody because they're asking for bodyguards and you say no because everything that you're able to tell is that they're doing it just because they want to employ people or for whatever reason, and then they end up getting hit.

Q: Were you able to supply weapons and/or vehicles at the district level to help out?

RICE: No vehicles: that was an issue, again some of them for status reasons and also because that's what they saw in the previous regime. It's not self-serving if you ask for a vehicle to help move around the city. If you're a poor council member from Sadr City, how do you get around? So when you're asking for a vehicle, it could actually be the right thing to do.

We were also very conscious in wanting them to keep ties to the community. If you give them vehicles, give them weapons, give them bodyguards, they start to be separate. How can you ask somebody to serve as a local elected official when they're going to be in danger and not give them tools to protect themselves? Sometimes I had these conversations with people. "Only you can make the decision as to whether or not you really want to risk being a council member. How much do you believe in it? For budget reasons, or because we've got to keep you close to the people, we're not going to give you these things, and if you feel you can't be a council member because of that, then resign."

Q: Actually we've been kind of going all over these first three questions, which really are quite interrelated, but you've been talking about your relationship with these city councils and how you went about working to set those up and the difficulties you had, but now let's look at your relationship with CPA and forget the Iraqis for a moment. Here you are trying to make this system of councils work and do all the things you were talking about. What kind of support were you getting from the CPA? By this time CPA is there, Bremer's there, Garner's gone, more

people, more resources, more authority. Are you getting good support from the CPA and are you working in close concert with them, or are there institutional problems here, or what's going on?

RICE: I think my view is everybody there, everybody from the president, the bureaucracy back here, the military, everybody is trying to do the right thing. I think institutionally the capacity wasn't there and the relationships weren't defined.

It's astounding to me in some cases that CPA was never adequately staffed. Was CPA never adequately staffed because of lack of institutional capacity? For instance, the State Department never could send over enough people because we don't invade countries and set up governments on a regular basis to have those numbers of people. Or was it people not being provided also because of petty reasons or institutional conflicts? Much has been made, I think, of the State Department-Department of Defense rivalry. My view of that question is both. I don't think we have the institutional capacity, and I think there was some stupid rivalry. Why wasn't Tom Warrick allowed in country early on? Those kinds of things.

I think in the first couple of months of my job it was critical that there was a uniformed guy there doing that job, because if you're going to rely on the soldiers to set up the councils and supervise the councils, you need somebody who understands and who is military, who can go to a battalion commander and be the same rank as him, or kind of do my best to keep the soldiers in the right role, which most of the time was not an issue, but we did have some captains and lieutenants out there who didn't understand or who wanted to be the big man and who wanted to appoint the council, wanted to boss the council around, and that was some of the things I had to do, try to find out where those were issues and fix it. As a military person advising a democratic government, there is kind of a...

Q: There's disconnect there.

RICE: Yeah, but for the most part I think we were able to do it. Getting back to the institutional issues, a couple months into the system we should have had more State Department or USAID or even contractors there.

As time went on in the August-September timeframe, I became more of an advisor to the council, not in my military role but because I was there as a military person who happened to have local government experience, and I became more of an advisor that way. RTI supposedly, not to mention all these people who were supposed to come from the State Department, and we'd gotten very few of, and some of the people....

We got a guy named Bridge Colby; maybe I should also give you his name if you're doing more interviews. He's a State Department guy, a very young political appointee, who came over there for 90 days. There were too many people on just these 90-day cycles. Bridge was a brilliant guy who did very effective work, but it took him a few weeks to get into it and then he's gone.

We were never staffed adequately, not from the State Department point of view or USAID point of view, not from the RTI point of view. They were supposed to have dozens of people working in Baghdad, professional consultants from around the world and then, of course, their local staff. Eventually they did get their local staff up to par, but there weren't enough people.

Again, we weren't trying to impose our system on them. It's not that they were stupid but they were isolated. They lacked access. Even the people that are smart and had traveled abroad didn't understand a lot of the nuances. You can't just say, "Okay, you're a smart and well meaning person. Be a local government." They need institutional capacity development.

Q: The fact that you continue to speak to some of these people says to me that almost all of them are English speakers well educated.

RICE: Many are, and there are many people whom I got to be close friends with who didn't speak English and we would rely on translators. With one guy, we continue to have phone conversations and neither of us has the slightest clue what the other one is saying, but it's the relationship. Yeah, I'd say probably a third of the Baghdad city council speaks pretty good English and probably 20 percent of them speak fluent English.

Q: These would be kind of from the elite levels of society or pretty well educated?

RICE: I think there's a good mix on the Baghdad council, even just your common laborers. I think it's a pretty good mix demographically and socially and economically and academically, education experience on the council. There are some people who never got a high school education.

But to the institutional development thing here too, one of the issues was even RTI, the contractor, if you look on their website and the qualifications they wanted for people to come over and work in their government civil society, they wanted PhD Arabic speakers. Well, how many of those are out there?

Q: Not enough.

RICE: Let's assume for a moment—one of them was Doctor Amal Rassam, but again for the civil society aspect of what they're doing, it's probably not as important, but for the local government advisors, don't you want someone who has local government experience? I'm not criticizing PhDs or academics, but you want a mix of people. You don't want just local government people either; you do want some people who are PhDs and well understand history and culture and political science. You want people at the strategic, operational and tactical levels, I guess, even in local government.

Well, even in July and August as I am shifting more into that advisor role, we also needed help. There were, again, 88 neighborhood councils, nine district councils, and a city council, and the IRDC guys are doing their best, and Andy Morrison and others, and I'm doing my best to guide them and tell them what to do where they have questions, and they're doing many things just independently on their own initiative that's very good, but we knew we needed more local government advisors.

I was frustrated. I kept asking, and Andy kept asking RTI to pony-up people, and they weren't getting them for a lot of reasons. Initially I think their criteria was way off base of what they needed, and then it also became, as the security situation got worse, they were having more trouble recruiting people. They would get some people over there who would stay a week and then decide 'forget this.'

For instance, there's a friend of mine who is a former mayor, who now does local government consulting in the United States, in Colorado primarily but he's worked for the National League of Cities and others, so it's not cronyism, but he wanted to come over. It took months to get him through the city, at first because he wasn't a PhD Arabic speaker and then I don't know why it took so long. I was telling RTI, and Andy was telling RTI, "Look, your contract says you're supposed to provide us 12 people. We don't have any. We have Amal and she's great but, again, we need 12 people. If you can't get them, I know somebody who's willing and able to come," and it took months for him to get there. He finally did come over in September; he got there in late September.

So that again gets back to the institutional question. What was the problem between State, Defense and the pettiness? What was the problem, even when State was willing and able, and others? How come they couldn't come over there; how come the contractors couldn't get people over there; and how come, when we did have somebody who was willing and able and qualified, it took so long to get them over there?

Then the other issue that kind of touches into this relationship issue is, again, you know, you had Mark Yanaway and others—Mark was never a problem—who were working with the National Governing Council and they thought that that's where... What were some of the issues? [One big issue was] local councils doing things that the National Governing Council didn't like or CPA didn't like. Well, no, you can't let the council do that because that's a decision of the National Governing Council. We all tend to bond with the levels we're working at, which I think is natural friction.

Again, frankly, in some ways a lot of that was healthy. When the local councils would say, "You know what? We're going to set up local traffic courts," and the Ministry of Justice says, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. No, you don't. That's a national issue," I think that's healthy tension as they struggle to define their own relationships and how they want the system to go. I think that's healthy, some elements of that.

We had a lot of short-term taskers come down from CPA: "We're going to have \$2,000,000,000 that's going to get allocated, and we need your list of projects day after tomorrow." Well, that doesn't give you a lot of time to work with the local councils, to run them through the process. Eventually they're going to be making these decisions on their own. This is an issue I should touch on, too. I'll write that one down and come to it in a minute.

Getting to the institutional issues too again, keep in mind I was a military guy initially working for Fifth Corps and there was some resistance from Fifth Corps to letting me get involved in the councils to the extent I did, and from my unit. As time went on, I started asking for help as we got busier with the councils. There was resistance both at my unit.... There were a lot of people in my unit who sat out at the unit headquarters at Camp Victory near the airport for the entire deployment and did absolutely nothing, but there was always this argument. I would ask for people and ended up finally getting a few people from my unit to help out and work with the councils. You always heard, "If the military keeps staffing CPA, CPA will never learn to staff itself," and my answer was, "CPA will never learn to staff itself."

Q: It wasn't going to happen.

RICE: And there were people in the unit as high as colonels, generals, who said, "You know what? My goal is to get my unit disengaged and get us out of here, and if I keep sending people over there to do work that needs to be done, we'll never get out of here," and my attitude is, "You know what? We're never going to get out of here until the work that needs to be done is done." So you have this institutional tension there.

Q: Colonel Yanaway made the same point. He was being general, of course, but in general the attitude of the military is: "We fight the war, we won the war, now let's go home and leave it to CPA and others to do whatever else needs to be done; we've done our job." That's a broad generalization but that in fact is true.

RICE: Yeah, it was, and I kind of disagree with that too. I can remember even being told by an O6 when I'm developing this council handbook, "Okay, you can develop the council handbook, but I want you to give it to Andy Morrison and I want Andy Morrison to be the guy up there teaching it to the other people"—he doesn't know how to do that; he can't do that—just not wanting me to get that involved. Eventually it kind of just became accepted and supported that, okay, Joe Rice was going to be involved, but then again trying to get other people from my unit...

Q: It was almost on a case-by-case basis as opposed to an institutional commitment to getting this kind of work done.

RICE: And some of the other issues: again, do we have enough troops over there, and all that? We heard the president say, "If generals ask, I'll send them," and we heard the generals say, "We're fine," and all that sort of thing. Well, if that's true, then how come my security escort missions kept getting cancelled? We were supposed to with a certain number of people, and especially toward February and March it was horrible. Almost all our missions were getting cancelled, and we would go anyway.

Q: Actually, Colonel Yanaway said—I think he was speaking of the country at large and, of course, you're more focused on Baghdad—he said the country at large was, by and large, safe. He said he didn't have a problem.

RICE: I felt pretty safe there.

Q: Isolated areas.

RICE: I felt pretty safe most of the time going out in Baghdad. I think some of it was just a crap shoot. If you were in the wrong place at the wrong time and somebody wanted to do something or someone planted an IED [Improvised Explosive Device] you were going to get hit, but for the most part.... We would go out into Baghdad three or four times a week with a couple vehicles and a few soldiers, driving through streets, sitting in that traffic with hundred and thousands of Iraqis around you. I make this point in my talks in Denver all the time in these clubs and such, that if it was as anti-Coalition as I think you sometimes get the impression it is from what happens in the media, I wouldn't have been there, I wouldn't be here, because we were out there all the time, and generally I felt pretty safe. There were a couple of times that incidents happened around us, never to us.

Q: Plus, if I understand it from Colonel Yanaway and others, AK47s are quite common, people have them, they're all over the place, so if somebody wants to take a shot at you, there's nothing really stopping them.

RICE: It became so hard. At first, initially, you're on the lookout for weapons in the crowd, but then you go by and every facility is guarded by either a private force or.... Yeah, there are weapons all the time. Okay, well, I can't just look for weapons; I have to look for weapons pointed at me. Then it became I can't just look for weapons that are pointed to me; I have to look for weapons that are pointed at me that are firing.

Some of the things I just never understood. Our security mission for the opening of the Baghdad City Council, the perimeter was going to be covered, and was covered by the international media. Our escort for that mission got cancelled the day before. You go to the operations center—again, these are guys that don't have... and again, that is one time that I said, "My mission's more important than anybody else's."

Normally I wouldn't say that because everybody's mission is important and I don't understand the ramifications, but the point is there weren't enough troops to go around and the operations center that is prioritizing all these CPA missions that want to go out and [if] I only can support a third of them, which third do I choose? Ambassador Bremer is going to be there; the media is going to be there. Don't you think this is kind of important? "Well, I've got to do all these other things."

I understand all these other things are important, but you know what? I've kind of got to get there in advance to do the set-up and to rehearse with the chairman—not like I was telling him what to do but just how the meeting is going to flow, because he's never run a meeting. This was the first meeting he ever ran as a city council member and he doesn't know. I'm like, "Here's kind of the protocol and here's what you should do. It's kind of important that we get there."

And these kinds of things happened all the time. There were many times, later on especially, again that our security escorts were being cancelled and we just had to go anyway. We would scrape together soldiers. There were a couple times I just went. Changed into civilian clothes one time and hopped out the gate—not that I can blend in as an Iraqi but at least I'm not wearing a uniform and that apparent—and somebody picked me up on the outside and we just went to the meeting. You've got to go.

Q: This was outside the Green Zone?

RICE: Yeah, outside the Green Zone. I want to make sure I get this in: We talked a lot about the city of Baghdad and, again, there were these councils in these areas that were formed outside of Baghdad. The city of Baghdad was about 20 percent of the land area of the province. It's got about 85 percent of the population but it's only about 20 percent [of the area].

Some of the institutional issues that I fought with the Iraqis and the councils: We have problems connecting the city administration of Baghdad, the service providers, with these new councils. The councils thought they were in charge now and the bureaucrats think what bureaucrats think, "I'm the professional, I'm a water engineer, I've been here for 20 years, I understand the system, I'm trained in this, and now I've got this yahoo council member telling me what to do." Well, that's the kind of natural conflict that happens all over the world. But there weren't the institutional relationships set up to help define that and keep it healthy.

We had a big problem connecting the councils to the executives in Baghdad for those reasons and others. One of the reasons for that is there's a conflict between if you want to fix sewer problems, for instance, because of health and safety issues and so we want the executives to hurry up and fix the problem, but you're also trying at the same time to develop this representative government system that has community meetings, a public process to decide priorities and all that, and it's kind of by its nature a little slow and you're trying to hurry up and get the reconstruction going, so there were many times the CPA would empower the executives,

which was the right thing to do from a reconstruction point of view but marginalized or taught the wrong lessons as far as how the council would be developed and getting the executives to be responsible to the councils as the councils are the representatives of the people. Right now the executives are looking at CPA as the big boss. Eventually, if the system is going to work and be healthy, they've got to view the people through their council as the boss.

Again, it gets to the institutional development. The councils and the executives have to learn that both their roles are important and they have to learn how to work together in a complementary fashion, as opposed to the councils thinking, "Well, I'm in charge now, do this," but the water engineer also has to realize that there's a value in involving the public and the council. You've got to have the checks and balances.

Q: That seems to me, going back to some of the other interviews we've done with people, and this has nothing to do with how well educated or smart Iraqis are, because these are concepts that are totally foreign to this kind of society. Can they be developed over time? Perhaps, perhaps not. Can they be imposed? Well, according to some of our interviewees, this is exactly what we're trying to do, to essentially impose this on them, I guess with mixed results.

RICE: Ultimately, I think, I'm actually guardedly optimistic about the future of Iraq. Frankly, my biggest concern now is not so much civil war or a return to a dictatorial regime but it's re-centralization that will marginalize. I think local government and decentralization and all the benefits that come from that, risks being stifled in the cradle, so to speak, because of lack of focus on institutional development, lack of understanding of the importance of local government (and obviously I am very biased toward local government). I think if you look at healthy democracies around the world, they tend to have strong local governments.

Q: One of the questions in here is "What is the most likely long-term future of the institutions you're talking about?" and I gather you're saying that you're guardedly optimistic that there is a positive future.

RICE: I think because there's an expectation of it now, and is it well enough rooted? For instance, one of the signs of success I took was even Muqtad al-Sadr's group whose calling "the occupation of the Coalition is evil" and everything... The councils never existed before. There was a city council before, but it was appointed by Saddam Hussein, and there were not district or neighborhood councils before. It seems like a sign to me that there's an expectation of local councils. Even when Muqtad al-Sadr started talking about how his group needed to take over the councils and the councils were bad, he wasn't calling for the abolition of the councils, he was calling for his people to take over the councils, which to me in some ways is a sign of success. Again, there's that expectation that, "Hey, there ought to be a neighborhood council and it ought to have certain authorities and powers." So that's even, in that twisted way, a sign of....

But, yeah, I'm concerned about re-centralization. In December, State funded a trip for four of the Baghdad council members to go to the Denver metro area to see local government in action in the Denver metro area. Why Denver? Well, because I was from there and Peter Kenny was from there. I had a reference sent over from the Colorado Municipal League that we had translated into Arabic. It's a book they give newly elected officials in Colorado. It wasn't fully applicable but parts of it were applicable. So we used a lot of references and such from Colorado and that sort of thing.

So the visit was arranged to Colorado so there was already somewhat of a connection, they had already heard about Colorado, and obviously when I'm giving experiences about how to take public comment, I sometimes use specific experiences in meetings that I held. Anyway, we brought them to Colorado and they visited Denver, they met the governor, they went to several other cities around the Denver metro area and observed council meetings. It was helpful to them because, even though we could sit and, for instance, talk about public comment and how an average citizen can walk in off the street, sometimes rail against the government very illogically, sometimes have good points, but just how the public could interact directly with the council and how these things resulted, influenced the policy development process and such. They understood it. They knew about it before we even talked about it, but until they actually saw it happening. Now they saw something.

[END TAPE]

Q: ...every good chance that you will be going back there within the next year or so. Two questions then: Would you expect to be working in this same area with the local governance, the councils, and following on that; and, if so, is there anything that you would want to do in terms of preparing yourself, now that you have been through it the first time, areas that you think you could bone up on or whether your unit or the military could train you to make you more effective the second time around?

RICE: I think part of this process is just talking to various people and getting the history out there and seeing what lessons we can learn, and then I think we should be starting now already reading a lot of these things. Even as much as I've been talking and continuing my log in Iraq, I really still need to kind of analyze it in a more methodical way and ask them those questions, and I think we as an institution need to do that too. What kind of things can we be doing now that we can benefit from?

Personally I have to say I'm not thrilled with the idea of going back, just mostly because of the disruption of my family and everything again, although I'm pretty bonded with the place over there now. My nightmare scenario is not so much being mobilized again but it's being mobilized again and doing something completely unrelated to the experiences and relationships. Again, I have developed a knowledge and relationship with so many people in Baghdad provincial government and an interest in it and understanding of it and that sort of thing that I think that's

where I should be. There's going to be somebody in that capacity. Even in Bosnia, which we've been in for almost 10 years, we still have a military liaison to Brcko, for instance, which is a city in Bosnia. I would like to go back in that capacity. So my nightmare scenario is not so much being mobilized again but it's being mobilized again and being assigned as the night operations officer in Tikrit.

Q: In other words, the military just kind of discounting the year of experience that you've had and the relationships you've developed and kind of just disregarding them.

RICE: Yeah, assigning me as a cultural affairs officer somewhere. I have to let you know I have continued my association with Baghdad, not just through these occasional personal phone calls and such, but through this continuing relationship with the Denver area as a volunteer and others.

There's an association of local governments in the Denver area that long ago kind of formally decided to establish an ongoing relationship with folks in Baghdad similar to a sister city type relationship. We were recently selected—this is another story behind that, the White House issuing a press release that made it very political—by the State Department, the Denver area, as one of six U.S. cities—regional, not just the City of Denver—for a \$20,000 grant and a partnership that will fund exchanges and ship humanitarian and school supplies and whatever, Baghdad getting some technical assistance, an ongoing relationship, some humanitarian supplies and other things and, of course, the Denver area getting cultural understanding and building these personal relationships and all the benefits, eventually maybe business relationships and those sorts of things.

Q: Obviously it's going to go forward now, but was any of this going on even, say, from June onward? Were we bringing people over as part of the State Department's, I think they used to call it, Fulbright Program, bringing people over to spend two, three, four weeks?

RICE: Well, we started with that visit in December that brought four council members over and from that other things happened. While they were in Denver, they met United Way. United Way, of course, is an international organization. United Way has decided that they're going to get involved in this partnership that I just described and they're to bring over some people in the next couple of months that are from civil society NGOs over there and they're going to bring them over to get some training here in the U.S.

The December visit was the first actual exchange, and, frankly, one of the Baghdad Council members—you mentioned Fulbright—was selected for a six-week Fulbright seminar in Illinois and is just finishing that up today. Tomorrow, because of this partnership, we're flying her to the Denver area and she's going to spend a week—she's actually going to stay at my house—and she's going to go around and give a couple of talks.

The relationship is continuing. Basically some of this institutional development that I've been harping on that I think is so very important that we need to do, I'm doing my best as a volunteer private citizen through this partnership, and many others have bought into it now too, to do it as best we can.

Q: That's great. Well, let's kind of finish this up with the question: What advice would you pass on for future operations if we're ever called to war again in similar circumstances, i.e. should we ever be involved in a "similar" situation, what would be the two or three or four things that you would think need to be done that maybe weren't done this time around?

RICE: Some of this is out of my lane, but I think work directly with some of what I consider the consequences of it. First, with a sufficient number of troops: I do think we went in with an insufficient number of troops and failed to heed the warnings and historical lessons of the past that talked about establishing security in the immediate post-war situation is critical, not only because of the damage to the infrastructure you can prevent but also the mindset of society. When you just lose that security...

Q: Sense of security.

RICE: Well, that every-man-for-himself type atmosphere that took over on the streets, armed gangs. Security has been and continues to be the number-one issue that Iraqis tell you is their problem. Training and preparation: I think there are things like identifying and securing critical infrastructure immediately. I remember driving down around in Baghdad those first couple of weeks doing the museum assessments and going by buildings that were being looted and not knowing: Should we get involved? How do we get involved?

And some of the training and preparation like, if we are going to go in and guide or foster or impose, whichever of those words you want to use, democratic systems, we ought to have some better research done as far as what the existing system is, how and where we want to guide it or involve the indigenous people in doing their own processes, and how to bridge that—what is the relationship with the new local government—and think through some of these things we broad brushed. Okay, here's a two-page concept paper. It's a wonderful concept paper. Who's going to implement it? What kind of resources do they need for offices and computers and staff and training? I guess that's number two.

Number one is sufficient number of ground troops. Number two is training and preparation. I think there are a lot of subsets of both of those.

Again this one is out of my lane, but a lot of the council members would come to the Coalition as their friends or neighbors or constituents had been detained. We actually went out to Abu Ghraib a couple times because one guy was caught up in a raid, he was there for 90 days, and finally

they just released him, but he didn't get any of his property back. He signed a statement that he got all his property back, but the statement's in English and he doesn't speak any English.

We tried to help them set up through the council, a "constituent services office" basically that worked those kinds of things. It gets to the whole huge cadre of legal teams, not just police officers and people who could advise the police, not who could just train police officers but also advise them on democratic procedures, policing in a democratic society, corrections officials, judges, prosecutors, lawyers to make the whole legal system work, because there were a lot of problems. Again, people were coming to the councils.

Again this is kind of out of my lane but it dealt with some of the ramifications, that it took us forever to stop the looting, but when we started arresting people—I didn't directly do this—by the time a soldier arrested somebody and they got to a prison camp, the people at the prison camp had no idea what they were arrested for, the reports, the paperwork, and so they didn't know if he was there for murder and they should hold him for a long time or if he was there for stealing something or trespassing or looting and he should stay for three days. So you ended up holding people who should have been there for only a few days for months and people who should have been there for capital crimes ended up getting out in a few days, because they had no idea.

So this huge cadre of legal teams is, again, something that we learned from all the people in the streets and the Iraqis who came to us with these issues.

Q: Well, I think we're going to wrap this up. I want to thank you on behalf of USIP and ADST. When this is turned off, I'll get Mr. Morrison's name and one or two other names that you wanted to suggest. This is the end of Tape 2 Side A.

[END INTERVIEW]