

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

FREDERICK C. SMITH
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interviewed by: Phil Wilcox
Initial interview date: August 4, 2004
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Frederick Smith, 57 years old, is a career Department of Defense (DoD) civil servant. From August through October 2003, Mr. Smith worked in the DoD office of the CPA. In October 2003, he served in Baghdad as Deputy Senior Advisor for National Security Affairs. He was also the Senior Advisor to the new Iraqi Ministry of Defense. His area of specialty is security.

In November 2003, a new Ministry of Defense (MoD) began being created to replace the old, dysfunctional MoD. There was little prep work, as the new MoD could not be designed until arrival in Iraq because the construction of this entity had to draw heavily on Iraqi and coalition contributions. Consultation between the ministry, the Iraqi Governing Council, and other Iraqis was essential for Iraqi "buy in".

Smith notes that disbandment of the Iraqi Army and de-Baathification made it easier to build the new MoD. Contrary to what might be expected, one-third of the new MoD consisted of Iraqi ex-military. These persons were invited back in provided that they were qualified and had not committed atrocities. Reincorporation was eased when CPA administrator Bremer authorized the Iraqi Governing Council to make hiring exceptions for qualified people. While the ministry sought ethnic balance merit, not previous jobs or seniority, was the key criterion.

Smith saw the civilian leadership of the CPA as an essential model for Iraqis to emulate. Bremer was a strong, demanding, and effective leader. His effectiveness was enabled by ample funding for CPA and the power of discretion allowed him by Washington. The MoD also benefited from these two allowances. However, Smith notes that delays in funding were problematic, and potentially politically motivated, but recognizes that those controls were needed.

Smith notes that the lack of post-victory plans was a big problem. The number and mix of U.S. forces was inadequate: more military police and civil affairs units were needed. The lack of security was a big constraint, although rebels consisted of only 5% of the population and were opposed by the majority of Iraqis. The insurgency affected travel, communications, and the recruitment for the various services. Most Iraqis want U.S. forces to stay, fearing chaos.

In general, Smith believes that Iraqis are grateful for the demise of Saddam. Abu Gharib, nonetheless, was "black spot" for the U.S.

In addition to the security concerns, Smith notes a serious shortage of Arabic linguists and Iraq/Middle East specialists. Too many personnel were unqualified, untrained, short-term volunteers. This limited the effectiveness of the US effort.

The decision to transfer sovereignty to Iraq earlier than expected forced Americans and Iraqis to focus and act responsibly. The new MoD structure was based more on UK and European models than on DoD, as the British had more experience, knowledge, and training for peacekeeping and nation building. Smith believes that the Iraqis will preserve at least some of the new structures that were established, but that Iraq will not be Jeffersonian democracy.

Smith believes that a greater multilateral approach would have been more effective in accomplish the task and protecting U.S. interests. For example, UN leadership of the coalition with unified U.S. command over a broad, multi-national force may have proved more effective. He also believes that there is no one model for military, reconstruction, or nation building challenges, as these features are unique to each situation. The lessons learned from Iraq display that come next time, the United States will need better planning, expertise, and greater international support.

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SMITH: My name is Frederick C. Smith. I'm 57 years old. I've worked in the government for 26 years in the Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense and Policy. I served in the Navy many years ago. I have a graduate degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. I did not receive any specific Iraq training prior to my assignment to Baghdad; but I did have the advantage of having helped start up and work in the Washington office of the Coalition Provisional Authorities (CPA) for approximately three months: August to October of 2003--and also went to Baghdad for about ten days from late August to September, prior to my assignment in Iraq. I served in Iraq with the CPA from November 2003 through June 2004. I worked for Ambassador Jerry Bremer and in the office of National Security Affairs. I actually had two titles: Deputy Senior Advisor for National Security Affairs as well as Senior Advisor for the Ministry of Defense. My principle job was to establish the new Ministry of Defense.

Q: Describe your work in re-establishing the Ministry of Defense.

SMITH: I worked in the CPA organization in Baghdad. Under the Saddam regime of course, the Ministry of Defense was completely controlled by him, the Baath party, and certain members of his family. So when I arrived in Baghdad in early November 2003, there was no Ministry of Defense because it, together with the Iraqi military, had been dissolved in May of 2003.

There were no plans at that time to establish a new Ministry of Defense until April 2005, but the November 2003 agreement between the CPA and the Iraqi governing council to transfer sovereignty not later than the first of July 2004, radically changed our plan. We obviously had to create a new Ministry of Defense before July 1st so that it could provide civilian control of the new military. In addition, the Ministry of Defense could play a role in the new national command structure we were also designing and establishing. Also, we needed a Ministry of Defense so that we could perform the basic functions of providing support and logistics for the Iraqi armed forces. So, beginning in late November of 2003, we began work to establish the new Ministry of Defense, starting from scratch.

We had to shift gears pretty quickly. When I went out to Baghdad, I went with the expectation of working on establishing, organizing, and designing a new Ministry of Defense. But, we didn't expect it would happen so quickly, and very little work had been done on this before I arrived. All of the work done by my predecessors at CPA up until that time had really focused on the training and equipping of the new Iraqi army. So I went out there with expectations of working in this area and putting together the various components and possibly doing some training and laying the other ground work for a new ministry. But I did not realize until November 15th that we're on such a tight deadline and that everything had to be in-place by the spring of 2004. We had to design an organization, recruit people, design a training program, and start thinking about and writing regulations, legal authorities for the minister and the ministry.

Q: Would it have been possible in retrospect to have done some of the planning and designing before we went in—or was the situation so uncertain that you would have to wait until you got there in the beginning—thinking about how to do it?

SMITH: In general, I really believe you'd have to be there to do the work successfully. It is very difficult to try to design things, especially back here in Washington, which would have fit nicely into the situation out there.

Also, the ministry is not a U.S. product, but rather a coalition product. Indeed, our coalition partners made a far greater contribution in terms of the final design than we Americans. I vividly remember one night in early December; there were seven of us in a room doing the initial work on the design: two Americans, one Brit, two Australians, one Czech, and one Estonian. The design of the organization that evolved from this resembled the British model far more than the U.S. model. The Ministry of Defense in Iraq today looks nothing like the Pentagon. So, I think if we had tried to design this organization before we went there, we would not have benefited from the input of our coalition partners. We also consulted extensively with Iraqis, because of the need to understand the situation: the size of the previous military and what had existed prior to starting this work.

Q: Did you have the benefit of a lot of intelligence analysis/basic information about the old Ministry of Defense, the structure there; and were you in any case able to turn to Iraqi expertise for consultation about how they did it, what they wanted, and what they needed?

SMITH: We had access to basic information about the old Ministry of Defense. But quite frankly, there was nothing in the old ministry that we wanted to replicate. The old ministry was completely run by the military people. So in terms of establishing a civilian-led and controlled Ministry of Defense, the previous organization did not meet that requirement at all. The previous Ministry of Defense was a bloated, inefficient bureaucracy; there was not much that we wanted to inherit. We did try to look at some of the various rules and regulations, policies, and other things that they had in effect. However, nothing seemed to be applicable to the type

of ministry, values, and principles that we wanted to instill in this new ministry. Other people at CPA were working in various areas with other ministries. Today, there are 26 ministries in Iraq, approximately the same number they previously had. It's a very top-heavy government. The advisors at CPA who were working on the other ministries inherited the bureaucracies they had to work with, and they had many problems. We had many challenges in establishing a brand new ministry with nothing to start with. But in the end it was to our advantage that we did not inherit anything of the old.

Q: Was the decision to disband the Iraqi army a plus or minus in your efforts to redesign and constitute a new Ministry of Defense?

SMITH: I think it was a plus. I was not there when that decision was made in May 2003. But looking back on the work that I had to do, I appreciated the fact that they had dissolved the military. It was the right decision for many reasons. Among other things, it made it easier for us to establish the new Ministry of Defense.

Q: Were there any Iraqis who had survived the Saddam Hussein system—the military structure there—who were still useful participants?

SMITH: Absolutely. We hired both ex-military and civilians to serve as civilians in the new Ministry of Defense. We hired several people who had worked in the Military Industrial Commission, which was a sort of military/industrial complex of various industries, who had worked directly for the government and for the military in Iraq. A third of the people we hired for civilian positions in the Ministry of Defense were former military. Ex-military people were not excluded if they were qualified, showed an interest in the new Iraq, understood the principle of civilian control, and if their record was clean with respect to violations of human rights or crimes.

We vetted these people to the best of our ability, though the process was not perfect. We had to be careful because if someone was thrown in prison during the Saddam period or had opposed Saddam that might have been a plus. All of the military officers who had been hired were from the previous military regime, but they were not members of the elite, special-guard units. They were more of the regular army, because Saddam's regime—especially the last ten years of his regime after the first gulf war 'till 2003— was top-heavy with Sunnis. Shiites were discriminated against and were denied promotions and opportunities. We hired many of these people.

Q: What was the impact of "de-Baathification.?"

SMITH: It has been misunderstood. First of all, the Baath party had tens of thousands of members. It was only the top four echelons of the Baath party who were excluded from government service, with Ambassador Bremer delegating the authority to the Iraqi Governing

Council to make exceptions and appoint people from these levels. So even though somebody had served in the top four levels of the Baath party, if that person's records stood up to scrutiny, and he/she had not committed any heinous crimes and acts against humanity, then they could be eligible.

We in the Ministry of Defense, however, did not seek any exceptions. We were only talking to about 40 to 50 people initially, and believed that we did not have to seek exceptions. My personal opinion about "de-Baathification" is that it was right. People who accepted positions in the top four levels of the Baath party did so knowingly with the expectations of receiving certain "perks," higher positions, better salary, and basically better living conditions. They made the wrong choice. In the new era it is time to let the other people who were denied opportunities serve. Some people who I talked to in the interview process had been denied promotions, and some were even put in prison because they refused to take these higher level positions, many of them suffering as a result. People who made that choice were among those we were looking for.

Q: How did you deal with the problem of ethnicity; did you have to strive for a kind of balance in your recruitment policy? Was the Iraqi Governing Council involved? Did you find a willingness of Iraqis to take initiatives, to make suggestions; or did they react more passively to the decisions and the proposals that you and your colleagues in the CPA made?

SMITH: Absolutely. We had to take ethnicity into account. It was an unwritten policy. But when we established the new Ministry of Defense, we made it clear to everybody that it would represent all of the people of Iraq. Moreover, it would be a ministry for the people, and it would protect all the people and not only one group or party. Still, we took into account people's ethnicity, whether they were Kurds, Shia, Sunnis, Turkmens, Christians; and we definitely considered a regional balance. Of course since there are more Kurds and Shia than Sunni, it doesn't always break out evenly.

At the same time, we made it clear to people whom we were hiring that the new system and promotion would be based on merit. Just because a person who had been a Brigadier General in the old army did not mean they would become a Brigadier General in the new army or that seniority of other kinds in the old system would be preserved in the new Ministry of Defense. In fact, we appointed several people as director-general, which is a very senior level position in this new ministry, who were under 40 years old and had older people working for them. That was something of a departure in a society where age and experience matter a great deal.

We did work closely with the governing council about this ethnicity-issue. The governing council itself was made up of a balance of different ethnic and political groups. So as we went through the different stages of establishing the new Ministry of Defense, we advised them, consulted closely with them, namely, with the National Security Committee of the governing

council of which Iyad Allawi was the chairman. He was very aware of and concerned about the ethnic balance in the Ministry of Defense, as he was throughout the government.

In addition to finding an ethnic balance within the Ministry of Defense, we had to also consider ethnicity in the other so-called "power ministries." The Ministry of the Interior which, in this government, as in many, is probably *the* most powerful ministry followed closely by the Ministry of Defense. The Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Justice all consist of the five "power ministries," or rather those ministries in charge of national security. The Ministry of Planning was also an important bureaucracy. In choosing the minister of defense in particular as well as the chief of staff of the Iraqi army, the senior military advisor, the secretary general, who was the senior civil servant, and other senior positions, we had to consider who would be occupying senior positions in the other ministries so that, overall, the Iraqi government would have a proper balance.

As for initiative, most Iraqis have very little initiative because taking initiative in the past was very dangerous and not rewarded. Most Iraqis, while they are well-educated, smart, intelligent people, were not used to taking initiative, as we really had to pull it out of them. They waited for us to make recommendations and to lay-out the options to them before they would "show their cards" or preference. Initiative and responsibility are things that will have to be redeveloped over the years here.

Q: You said that you had to create from scratch a Ministry of Defense. Did Iraqis resist the idea of civilian control? And tell me more about how you worked with the Iraqi Governing Council.

SMITH: I think it's very different. First of all, as we started drawing up this organization, I demanded three basic principles: strong civilian control; a simple, functional organization; and integration of the military and the civilian leadership of the Ministry of Defense. I did not want the military to have headquarters in East Baghdad and have the Ministry of Defense and its staff on the west of town. It was all going to be under one roof and closely integrated together. Those were our basic, three principles.

The Iraqis did embrace the principle of civilian control of the military. Some of the military people are having a much harder time coming to grips with that. But, everybody from the prime minister on down, the governing council and the security committee, supported this principle.

Most Iraqis with whom I spoke thought military control of everything in the old Iraq did nothing but get Iraq into trouble. Iraqis believe civilians are a little more broad-minded, broad-based, and understand other priorities for the government. They don't want to recreate an oppressive military, and they are quite frankly sick of war. There were very few times during Saddam's tenure that Iraq was not at war with somebody. So, the Iraqi people, and especially

the politicians, welcomed civilian control. Still, it will take some time for the military to adjust to this basic principle.

We did consult with the governing council and the security committee frequently and at weekly meetings with them on the Ministry of Defense and other issues in the national security field. Knowing we had to have their buy in, understanding, and acceptance of this whole concept in this new ministry as a result of turning over sovereignty at the end of June. If they didn't believe it and didn't understand it, they could just dismiss it all and go back to the old ways. They have not done that. It's still working, as of now.

Q: Was your task not only to create the Ministry of Defense under a civilian leadership, but to lay out the structure of the new Iraqi armed forces, for what the latter task separate?

SMITH: The latter was a separate effort that was started by my predecessors in approximately May or June of 2003 and lasted until the fall of 2003, throughout which they designed a military structure. The Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT), led by two-star Major General of the U.S. Army Paul Eaton, was responsible for both the training and equipping of the new Iraqi military. The infrastructure was completed during the summer and through the fall of 2003, consisting of the basic military organization structure and the picking of locations of the military bases.

Q: Was the design and the structure of the armed forces consistent with your planning for the new Ministry of Defense?

SMITH: What they designed was totally compatible. The design was to form in the military at the battalion level with plans to eventually create three division headquarters as well as brigade headquarters. The design was for 27 Battalions of army in addition to a plan for a small Iraqi Air Force which was UH1 light helicopters and about six C130 military transport air craft. There were also plans for a small coastal defense force with just five fast-patrol boats. The Defense Support Agency (DSA), which would work on contracting, supply, and logistics to support the military forces, kept an eye toward making this part of the new Ministry of Defense. Again, it was the November 15th agreement which accelerated my planning considerably. When we designed the Ministry of Defense, it was clear how this military was already being generated, how it would plug into the new ministry, and how we were going to absorb the people, the function, and the DSA.

Q: Tell me about the design for division of authority among the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior. What did you learn in working on those issues?

SMITH: In addition to the Ministry of Defense there was also the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice. We also designed the Ministerial Committee for National Security

(MCNS) to be chaired by the prime minister, which is very similar to the National Security Council of the United States, in that it is chaired by the president and has a national security advisor. The permanent members of MCNS are the ministers of defense, foreign affairs, finance, justice and interior. There are two statutory advisors, the national security advisor and also the senior military advisor, a four star general who works for the Ministry of Defense in addition to serving as the senior military advisor to the prime minister. This position is very similar to our chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Q: Looking back at the decision to transfer sovereignty on July 1st, would you have been able to do a better job if you had been given many more months or many more years to do this?

SMITH: Of course we could have done a better job. But having a target date and a deadline focuses one's attention, and we accomplished far more in about six months than we ever would have not being faced with the July 1st deadline. While it would have been ideal to prescribe conditions to be met before the transfer of authority, the deadline served the purpose of accelerating the process of Iraqi control. Although this requires a great deal of assistance from the coalition, control by Iraqis will now grow.

Q: Did the Iraqi movement towards sovereignty also focus Iraqis' attention and make them more responsive?

SMITH: Yes, they knew that the July 1st date was approaching, but they wanted assurances that the U.S. and the coalition were not pulling out and leaving Iraq. Virtually all Iraqis with whom I spoke believed that pulling out all of our forces would have created chaos and greater instability.

Q: Looking at it from afar, it seems that you had an extraordinarily difficult and sensitive job to do, representing a government whose military has invaded the country and displaced their former government. Please talk about the diplomacy involved in what helped you to gain confidence from the Iraqis. How does one go about doing this?

SMITH: It was sensitive at times because as we spoke about the first Gulf War, for example, many of the people with whom we hired in the Ministry of Defense had participated in that war, had been in Kuwait, and we defeated them. We defeated them in 2003 as well. There was sensitivity about the U.S. occupation, but virtually all Iraqis with whom I spoke were grateful that we had gotten rid of Saddam. The people who we hired at the Ministry of Defense would constantly remind me of never having the opportunity they currently did if Saddam was still there.

They were very realistic about the old regime and the old military. There's a great tradition of the military in Iraq as there are in other Middle Eastern countries. But in Iraq, when they talk with fondness of their military, they're going back to the 1920s or even earlier. People don't

speak as fondly about the military and the Ministry of Defense, post 1968, but there is a military tradition.

There were sensitivities, but I never had anybody complain to me directly about things that happened to them by the U.S. or the coalition forces. We did disrupt many of their services during the two wars, but the Iraqi people were used to hardships. Turning to the prisoner abuse in Abu Gharib, I thought it was embarrassing, a real black mark on us. But when I discussed this with the Iraqi people, they were not that upset about it. One Iraqi told me that they had lived under much greater hardships, and in some cases, many of the Iraqis thought we were being too lenient on prisoners or detainees. They thought we were giving these people too much leeway, and we were being a little too liberal. None of this of course, condones the behavior of some of our soldiers in the prison situations. Another Iraqi said to me: "It takes a lot to shock an Iraqi, after what we've been through over the years."

Q: In your work, creating the Ministry of Defense, tell me about your relationship with the leadership of the CPA, Ambassador Bremer, and the military leadership as well. Comment, if you'd like, on the lines of communication with Washington, the Department of Defense, and CENTCOM. Was the structure correct? What would you have done differently? Was it a wise decision to have a civilian (from the State Department) as the head of the CPA?

SMITH: I'll take your last question first. I think for many reasons that Ambassador Bremer was the right person for the job, and I don't think anybody could have done a better job than he did, under those circumstances. I don't think the fact that he served in the State Department and had been an ambassador really had that much to do with his selection as the administrator. I think because of his strong leadership qualities and experience in a number of different areas, in addition to his background and personality, would qualify him for the job. I do not think it would have been right to have a military person for the job. That's by no means any criticism or statement regarding Lieutenant General J. Garner. But I just think that if we had a military person or some recently retired military person, that would have sent the wrong signals to the Iraqi people, because many times we often saw Saddam wearing a military uniform. We wanted to create a democratic government where there's civilian control of the military; so, *not* having someone at the top who was closely associated with the military was a good move I think.

As far as my relationship within the CPA, I worked well with Jerry Bremer. He was very much in charge and wanted to be kept informed of everything. We kept him informed about progress of the Ministry of Defense. When I said the Ministry of Defense would be done by the 1st of June, he said it'd be done by the 1st of May. He kept pushing us, which was good. He made all the major decisions. He selected the Minister of Defense. Basically we had everything approved by him. He was also extremely aware of public affairs, not only in Iraq, but in the region and in the world. He made sure that our work was coordinated with things the Iraqis and other elements of the CPA were doing.

There were staff meetings every day of the week for the senior-advisors, so there was plenty of opportunity to see what other people were doing and to tell others what you were doing. Everybody got to know each other exceptionally well, and even if you didn't bring up an issue in front of everybody at the staff meeting, it was the best time of the day—first thing in the morning—to communicate with people and touch base with them, and to sort things out. So we all worked closely together.

Our office worked most closely with the Ministry of the Interior, and with the CPA's General Counsel. The military—General Sanchez and Coalition Joint Task Force—Seven, CJTF-7 as it was called; it is now called MNF-I, or Multi-National Force Iraq. Their job was mainly operational throughout the country. General Sanchez commanded the different forces in the country that were concerned about the insurgency and the terrorism, while we were establishing the new ministry. The new Iraqi military was still not a substantial force, but began to grow this summer. The operational command of the coalition forces was pretty much separate from the establishment of the Ministry of Defense. This changed somewhat in about April 2004 as a result of a directive from Secretary Rumsfeld whereby the CMAT people became part of our office, transferring from CENTCOM and CJTF-7. This really did not change our day-to-day working relationship; their office was right next to ours. We worked with General Eaton and his entire staff, but the relationship did not change.

Q: Did you find that the people in Washington gave you ample leeway to take initiatives, or was there a tendency here in Washington to second-guess? How did that work?

SMITH: I found that in our specific area—in *my* specific area in establishing the Ministry of Defense, I had a great amount of leeway and very little interference. We kept them informed about what we were doing, and it met their approval. Ambassador Bremer cleared the appointment of the Minister of Defense with Washington, and we laid out how these different heads of ministries were being filled by the different ethnic and religious groups as we had discussed previously, keeping Washington satisfied.

Q: Did you have adequate funding to do what you needed to do in your work?

SMITH: We had ample funding, but the timing and release of the funds was the problem. From the time that the supplemental was approved by Congress—the \$87 billion dollars; of approximately \$20 billion, about \$19 billion was for specifically for the reconstruction of Iraq. In my case, we needed the money for the construction of several buildings for the Ministry of Defense. It was difficult getting that money so we could do the design work and sign the contract for the construction, so it would all be ready in time. In the military, there was definitely a delay in the construction of some military facilities and contracting for equipment.

Q: I realize you weren't directly involved in that, but from those vantage points, should we

strive for more flexible contracting?

SMITH: That's a difficult question because with so much money that was spent...I would hate to see the audit of how the money was spent because we were trying to do a job in very little time. Still, we need control and accountability. I would not advocate more lax controls. I think delays were caused by certain individuals who withheld money, possibly for political purposes, at various times. A more rapid decision making process would have made money flow more quickly, notwithstanding cumbersome procedures. Most of these procedures, as frustrating as they can be at times, are needed for accountability.

One of Jerry Bremer's highest priorities was installing inspector generals in each Ministry of Defense. There were two or three people on the CPA staff who designed the inspector-general program; they set deadlines for these appointments in every ministry. There was a weekly report that went to Ambassador Bremer, reporting the status of the appointment of these inspector generals. One of the goals was to try to reduce (I don't think you could ever eliminate) the waste, fraud, and corruption in the ministry. This is one of Ambassador Bremer's highest priorities.

Q: You left after the transfer of sovereignty?

SMITH: I left two days after.

Q: What are your thoughts of the permanence and the efficacy of the institutions you built and the ability and desire of the Iraqis to carry on within that framework?

SMITH: I believe that there's a strong desire on the part of the Iraqis to carry on with the basic framework. It's not going to come out exactly the way we designed it. There was always a burning question about what would happen after the transfer of sovereignty. Would they take what we had done and throw it out the window? That's always a possibility, but I don't think it's likely. I think they will try to retain these basic structures, institutions, and principles. But it will not come out, for a number of reasons, looking like a Jeffersonian democracy. The Ministry of Defense will not be exactly the way it was designed. They've already made some adjustments. Some of my colleagues who are still there just told me that some of the changes they made were good, for the better. However, there are also signs that some of the Iraqis are falling back on their old ways since that is what they know best. And there are huge cultural differences. Here, some of the things we do, and the reasons we do them, just don't work with the Iraqi people. They don't understand it, and they also have other things they add into the equation of how they do business. Overall, I think the basic principles will be retained, but it won't look exactly the way we would want it.

Q: Tell me about American staffing—the training, preparation, and capability of the CPA staff. Could they have used more training, language, and area skills?

SMITH: I think more people with a deeper understanding of the culture, society, and history not only of Iraq, but of the region, would have been beneficial. The biggest staff problem, I think, was the turn over of people. Everybody, except the military, were there as volunteers, and you had very little say over who worked for you. In many cases, you took who you could get, because as time went on after the summer of 2003 and security deteriorated, the appeal of having an adventure working in Iraq wore off.

We had a lot of people going and coming, which, in addition to the lack of people with language and area skills, was detrimental. The British, however, made the greatest contribution. With their military and imperial background, they were able to bring greater knowledge and training than we were to both peace keeping and nation building. U.S. Foreign Service personnel in Baghdad were experienced, but most of the other U.S. personnel had no regional experience, much less experience in Iraq, and few had any training before they came.

Q: Much of it has been made here, in the media, about the lack of adequate American forces.

SMITH: I have my own personal opinion on that, but I would rather not comment specifically on whether we had the right number, or right type of forces. But I will say that one of the biggest problems we had at CPA was in the police force. For whatever reason, it took a long, long, time, putting together a police training program. Just now, the Iraqis have started training and equipping police forces. A lot of the work needs to be done at the level of the local police forces to create a secure, stable environment in Iraq. The police in Iraq are all under the Ministry of the Interior under a national chief of police.

Q: Should we have had a different mix of war fighters, counter insurgency, civil actions and peace keeping troops in the forces we sent to Iraq?

SMITH: Our war-fighting capabilities are second to none. We won the battle and the war, decisively. But we needed more military police. The civil-affair units have proven their value time and time again. We used them in late 1989 in Panama and in the aftermath of the first Gulf War. Mostly reservists serve in civil-affairs units and they do very well. But yes, we needed more military-police, civil-affairs units, engineering units, and specialized counter-terrorist and counter-insurgency units. There is a different mixture of the type of forces needed for the war and post-war task. Perhaps we did not have the right numbers and mix.

Q: Was the insurgency, terrorism, and violence a real impediment to developing institutions, reconstruction, and in retrospect, then, was there something we didn't do that we might have done to improve security?

SMITH: There's no question. Security limited our ability to form these institutions, just from a recruiting stand-point in terms of getting people to serve in the new Ministry of Defense. It was

extremely difficult to recruit the people because there was virtually no communication in the country. We couldn't advertise that we were looking for people, and that there were a meeting some place where applicants could go, because such locations would become targets for terrorists. There were several incidents where military recruits were being gathered together at recruiting stations to go off to training and suicide bombers attacked.

Lack of security impeded our ability to recruit people since they knew they would become targets. One of the people I personally recruited was assassinated right in front of his home because the terrorists knew he was working for the Ministry of Defense. These people would have death-threats tacked on their doors at home, so they knew where they lived.

Q: Did the Iraqis blame the Americans for these insurgencies, or were they able to look at this rationally? What has been done now to isolate the insurgents and the terrorists from the public and to diminish their legitimacy and appeal?

SMITH: That's a difficult question. In some respects, our presence certainly created some of the violence, because we are the targets for these people. I think also that the majority of the Iraqis are tired of this violence because many of the targets are Iraqis themselves. The pipelines and power facilities that Iraqis need are being sabotaged. The Iraqi people recognize that. I think the vast majority of Iraqis support the new government, or want the new government to succeed. The majority of Iraqis are thankful and grateful for the participation of the coalition in ridding them of Saddam.

Q: In view of that, is it vital for the Iraqi government to move ahead quickly towards elections?

SMITH: Elections will definitely provide more stability for the government. But it's going to be difficult conducting the elections scheduled for the end of this year or not later than the end of January 2005. From all the reports, I find it hard to imagine that they're going to be able to pull it off. But I hope they will and I think they need to have the election, because even though this interim-Iraqi government is now in power and has more credibility than the governing council, it is still viewed by some people as being appointed by the CPA and the United Nations; it was not elected. So until there are elections, the government cannot have legitimacy. But there are problems. First of all, who's conducting a census for the purpose of voter registration? That's going to be a very sensitive issue, with many groups because some groups will be worried that the census might diminish their influence. Elections create winners and losers, and there is a danger that losers who feel disenfranchised will not accept the result.

Q: What have we done in Iraq to discourage a return to development of the weapons of mass destruction? Do you have any hint of a desire to revert to that someday?

SMITH: Actually, I detected a desire from the Iraqis not to return to that. We had three people in our office who worked full-time on non-proliferation and preventing the return of weapons

of mass destruction. One program was designed to hire scientists who worked on WMD and redirect their work to other areas, discouraging them from moving to other countries and utilizing their skills and knowledge.

There were several other programs we designed to support Iraq's support for four non-proliferation-type treaties; and the interim government states that it would also do so. Iraq is already a signatory, and the interim Iraqi government pledged to abide by those treaties. Also, there are eight or so other treaties that Iraq will sign and ratify when it has an elected government. I believe Iraq wants to be a responsible member of the international community, and they are moving in the right direction with respect to WMD.

Q: Drawing on your experience from elsewhere in the world, is there a model of a wider multi-lateral coalition for tasks like Iraq, a larger UN role? Was there a better way to proceed with the war, or did the advantage of unified command require the choices we made. Please discuss the multilateral/unilateral tradeoffs in terms of winning legitimacy and being effective.

SMITH: I am an advocate of multinational force, under UN authorization, but with a unified US command. Such military operations actually do not work well under a UN command. However, a multi-national approach that spreads the responsibility and draws on nations that might be more experienced than the US can work well. Iraq is not just a US problem. It is a regional and global problem. Getting as many countries to provide the resources, including personnel, financial resources, and other skills and equipment for an undertaking as big as the Iraq project is the best way to go. We should make this huge project a multinational effort, which can be done without sacrificing unity of military command.

Q: Would Iraq have been more welcoming to a UN intervention force?

SMITH: In the Iraqis' eyes, occupation by any foreign force is occupation. They respect the ability of American forces but none of them wants to be occupied by any kind of foreign force. Certainly Turkish forces are *not* welcome in most of Iraq, and so that would have been difficult. The Iraqis are proud and sensitive people. So it's just not a matter that many more nations present would have eased the over-all pain for the Iraqis. It would be painful in any case for the Iraqis, but from the international perspective and in support of US interests, an international effort would be optimal.

Q: You've been very generous with your time. Please finish up with any additional comments.

SMITH: I hope we never have to do it again: Although there was a joke at CPA that we would all have a reunion at Pyongyang some time in the next couple of years. But if something were to happen there, it would be a totally different set of circumstances and would draw more on the German reunification model than the Iraq experience. Every situation is so different. People

were trying to make analogies with our occupation of Iraq and that of Germany to Japan, but there are very few.

That's not to say that we can't learn from it. We definitely need to learn from history and from our mistakes. But every situation is unique. One of the lessons is clear: we should have been better prepared with better planning for the post-conflict and what we were. Secondly, I recommend a multi-national effort if necessary. Also, we Americans should recognize that we might not have all the expertise needed to deal with such a situation. People like the British or some other countries can bring a lot to the table. They should be incorporated in our over-all plan.

Q: From what you saw in the American media, do you think they did a decent job informing the American public?

SMITH: I think they did a reasonable job. I think the decision by the Pentagon to embed the journalists was a good one. That was during the war. Just face it, in today's communications, people are going to see what's happening. Worldwide communications are instantaneous. Having reporters along with our military was a good policy. Many people complain about all the negative news coming out of Iraq. I suppose that's true, although frankly, there are a lot of ugly things happening, so when the media takes pictures, they will not just show children sitting in a classroom all neat and tidy and learning something. That's not going to be the picture. The picture of the car bomb that blew up is also a news worthy item. But I think the media has done a decent job. They are covering a difficult, ugly situation.

Q: Fred, Thanks for being generous with your time. Your comments are extremely helpful and valuable. And thanks you for your service in a tough assignment.

SMITH: It was difficult but I'm glad I did it. Thank you.