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IRAQ INSIGHTS

HON. CHET EDWARDS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Mr. EDWARDS. Madam Speaker, distinguished colleagues, as we address the complex challenges in Iraq, I think it is important that we hear all points of view. For that reason, I am submitting for the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD the firsthand observations of a young Army officer who has recently served in Iraq:

IRAQ: A SOLDIER'S PERSPECTIVE

You asked me to put together some thoughts on my experience in Iraq. First, Iraq is a very complex nation with huge differences between regions and locations. The experience of one battalion can be completely different from the experience of another next to it. Every area is different. My views reflect my very narrow vantage point after less than 12 months in a tiny corner of a very large country.

Bottom line up front—I do not believe that we are winning in Iraq. This is not because we screwed up or because we lack the will, the leadership, or the resources to win. I think we have thousands of smart, brave, and talented people who are giving everything they have to make us successful. I think the American people have given us their very best sons and daughters and more than enough money and equipment to achieve our goals. Despite this, it is clear that our current strategy is not likely to produce a secure, stable, and democratic state in the Middle East. I don't know who is to blame for this and I don't really think it matters. Since we are spending the blood and treasure of the American people at an unprecedented rate, we owe it to our nation to figure out a strategy that has some hope of success or to find an alternative end state that protects our long term interest. I don't know what that strategy is, but I can offer some insights from my limited experience. This may help those smarter than me to sort out what might work from what won't work.

Political Warfare: The hardest thing for us to adjust to once we hit the ground and really tried our hand at this counter-insurgency thing was the importance of personal relationships. They can have a decisive impact on the conflict and it really doesn't matter what scale you are dealing with. Whether it is the relationship between a local shop owner and a squad leader or the relationship between the Brigade Commander and the Provincial Governor, our day to day dealings with the Iraqis and the friendships that we developed with local opinion makers from the village to the national level were the most important contribution that we made to the campaign.

The Army has a method for designing a good military campaign. You study your enemy, define the source of his strength (his 'center of gravity' in military language), figure out the most vulnerable place to attack that strength, and then design a series of missions to achieve your goal. The focus is on defeating the enemy by attacking the source of his strength. We figured out pretty quickly that this kind of strategy would not work. We could have easily expended all of our resources trying to chase down the guys on our 'most wanted' list. What we found

though is that every time we killed a terrorist (and we killed a lot of terrorists) we created ten more because now his brother, cousin, and uncle all had to seek revenge against us. It just seemed so counter-productive.

Our real goal was to persuade our Iraqi friends and allies to actively and publicly support us. We wanted them to help us tip the balance of public opinion in our favor. To influence these key individuals, we gave them funding and allowed them to take credit for civil works projects. We provided security when needed and gave them prestige by showing publicly that our commander listened to their advice. We discovered that we were not fighting a military campaign, but a political campaign—not too different from what a small town mayor might do to win re-election back in the U.S.

I don't want to give the impression that we never had to fight. There was plenty of violence and plenty of people who needed to be killed or captured. But fighting was not our goal and winning a fight did very little to achieve our long-term purpose. Our goals were political in nature. Fighting terrorists was only something we did when needed, because it interfered with our political objectives. If we could ignore the terrorists, we were winning. If we had to stop our economic and political activities in order to fight terrorists, they were winning.

This may seem like a minor difference in viewpoint, but I think it is extremely important. Every region is different, but if a unit goes into Iraq with a focus on killing bad guys, they will find more than enough bad guys to kill. After a year, their region will be as bad as or worse than it was when they arrived. On the other hand, if they focus on waging a political campaign that builds relationships with key opinion makers, and tips public opinion in their favor, they will start to see real, permanent change. Sitting down and eating goat with a prominent and respected sheik can be more valuable than a hundred midnight raids.

The U.S. Army has done a better job training its combat formations than any army in history. However, we have much to learn as an Army about how to best teach and train this style of counter-insurgency warfare. It is easier to run a rifle range than train a squad leader how to negotiate with an Arab sheik. The Army should accept that counterinsurgency will be a prominent part of our future. We will need to educate and train our future leaders to deal with the inherent unpredictability of human behavior that is so critical in this type of warfare.

The Army is planning to invest billions of dollars in a new suite of military vehicles that will 'eliminate uncertainty' by interning every weapon on the battlefield to provide near-perfect situational awareness. I'm sure this will have its advantages in the future, but I think this investment is misguided. In a year in Iraq that had no shortage of enemy contact, I never needed to see down the barrel of a tank or Bradley. We had smart, well-trained soldiers who knew when and who to shoot. If leaders started getting involved in that decision, we almost always screwed it up. The guy on the ground knows the situation better than anyone. The more that technology enables his leader to see what he sees, the less his judgment and instinct will be used.

Iraq has taught us that uncertainty will always be a major factor in warfare. War is a distinctly human phenomenon and man is notoriously unpredictable. Trying to lift the fog of war with information technology is a hopeless task and a waste of resources. We should invest those dollars revamping our officer and NCO education systems to teach young leaders how to handle Iraqi farmers,

Afghan mullahs, and Sudanese warlords. A squad leader with a thorough understanding of Shia Islam and the history of Iraq is a lot more valuable than a squad leader with a camera on the end of his rifle. War always has been and always will be about people. If we want to revolutionize our Army we should invest in educating and training our people.

Enemy Motivation: During the course of the year, I had the chance to talk to a few leaders from the Mahdi militia and a few jihadists from the Sunni side. What amazed me about these guys is the total lack of any collective, long-term vision about why they are fighting us. There is no practical end state that they are trying to achieve. The radicals from both camps are absolutely convinced that they are under obligation from Allah to kill non-Muslims who occupy Arab lands regardless of the long-term consequences for their country. There is no amount of practical reasoning that will change this viewpoint. We have invested millions of dollars in public works projects in some towns to improve the lives of the people only to see citizens from those same towns attack and, in some cases, kill our soldiers. This is not rational behavior.

I believe that the majority of the insurgents fight us because they want the prestige and respect that other Muslims in their history and in neighboring countries have obtained by fighting foreign occupation. This reality should impact our national policy and our expectations. We have to accept the inconvenient fact that there will always be a significant level of insurgency in Iraq so long as non-Muslim troops occupy the country. No amount of political settlement or economic development will change that. This is something that our Congress and our Administration have to come to terms with. Unfortunately, I don't have any brilliant ideas on how to deal with this, but I am convinced that the insurgency in Iraq will not end one day before the last American soldier leaves the country. This is a reality that we must accept and must plan for.

Iraqi Security Forces: The Iraqi security forces (Army and Police) that I worked with ranged from superb to completely incompetent. Like any organization, the character of the unit was largely determined by the character of the commanding officer. Many were excellent (the best officers, in my experience, came from Saddam's old Army). Most officers did a great job when facing Sunni-based insurgents. In fact, we had to keep a close eye on most units to make sure they were not too heavy-handed against the Sunnis. When we dealt with the Shia, especially the Mahdi militia, things got a lot more complicated. Many officers were reluctant to fight the Shia militias because they had a well-justified fear for the security of their family. I have seen senior Iraqi officers flat refuse to follow American soldiers in pursuit of Shia insurgents—even when those insurgents just killed their own soldiers.

An Iraqi officer in either the police or the Army has to walk a very fine line. If he does not cooperate with the Americans, he risks losing the money, equipment, and prestige that come from American support. If he cooperates completely, especially in the pursuit of Shia targets, he is labeled a traitor, and his family and career can be in great danger. I have seen members of the National Assembly and Provincial Governors place tremendous pressure on police and Army commanders to get them to look the other way when it came to Shia militia activity. The few ISF commanders who are truly 'independent' are constantly under threat of being fired or worse. Most commanders manage to survive by establishing a delicate truce with the Shia radicals. They openly

profess support for the Americans and talk about fighting the militia in public. In private, they pass information about our operations and provide early warning to the militias the minute we leave the front gate of our camp. This is not speculation—my unit witnessed this many times.

I will never understand why the Coalition forfeited control of the hiring and firing of Iraqi Army and Police commanders over to a government that was so deeply divided in its loyalty. The resulting divided loyalty within the leadership of the ISF is probably the greatest threat to Coalition interests today. I doubt we can reverse this, but I can assure you that as long as the Iraqi government decides who commands and who doesn't in the ISF, they will be unable to deal with the Shia militias in any meaningful way. The Coalition, through our advisory teams should exert a greater degree of influence over the selection of Iraqi battlefield commanders. This will have a bigger impact on the quality of the Iraqi security forces than anything else we can do.

Key-Man Strategy: To find an honest, courageous, and liberal-minded Iraqi within the security forces is absolute pure gold. To have one as the police chief or military commander for your area is every US commander's dream. If these guys are so important to our strategy, then their selection, promotion, and protection should be a central component of our campaign plan. I think the Coalition has, in a good faith attempt to bolster the Iraqi ministries, stayed too aloof and uninvolving from these vital appointments. The Mahdi militia and Badr Corps, who do not share our sense of fair play, have filled the void and are aggressively filling the senior ranks of the ISF with their most loyal supporters.

I would suggest that the Coalition embark on a "Key Man Strategy" where great attention is devoted to the character and trustworthiness of all Security Force commanders down to the battalion and district police chief level. Engagement reports should be collected and assessments done so that the highest levels of the Coalition and Iraqi government have a fair and independent assessment of all the key battlefield commanders in the ISF.

Because of the convoluted and duplicitous nature of Arab politics, senior Iraqi leaders have great difficulty getting accurate information on the quality of their leadership at the tactical level. Because of this information vacuum, it is often difficult for a minister to say no when a group of 'concerned citizens' from the Mahdi militia approach and ask him to replace a particularly effective police chief. If the Coalition leaders who regularly work with the ministries had a more detailed assessment of these key men and their capabilities and limitations, then they could better advise the Iraqi leaders who are making the tough calls. We can also exert pressure to prevent attempts to fire independent leaders and replace them with militia supporters.

Entire provinces can be won or lost in the selection of Iraqi brigade commanders and Provincial police chiefs. The Coalition will probably never regain the exclusive right to select and remove these men, but we must devote enough attention to this process in order to influence it.

Militias: We will never reach any kind of acceptable political settlement as long as the Coalition and the Iraqi Government allow legitimate political parties to hold seats in the National Assembly while they finance and maintain military auxiliary wings that attack and kill Iraqi and American soldiers. These parties have enough clout in PM Maliki's administration to effectively block any major military operation against the militias. This is an impossible situation.

I don't have the expertise to comment on whether or not a temporary 'troop surge' is necessary. I can say, however, that a troop surge is pointless if we cannot set the political conditions beforehand that allow us to act freely against the militia. The Administration should seriously consider the legal implications of declaring the Jaysh al-Mahdi (Mahdi militia) a designated hostile force. This declaration gives local commanders much greater latitude to deal with this threat and will eventually force the organization to go completely underground. I am not a military lawyer so I don't know all the implications of such a move but I think it bears a hard look. We should also look for ways to continue to publicly expose the connections between the legitimate political activities of parties like the OMS (Office to the Martyr Sadr) and the brutal acts carried out by the Mahdi militia. This technique has shown some success in counter-insurgencies in the past because it drives a wedge between the political and military wings of the organization.

Because both militias are so tightly associated with the police and army, they receive a lot of their funding and weapons from these sources. The American taxpayer remains the greatest funding source for the Mahdi militia. We have fought militia members in police uniforms carrying weapons that were issued from U.S. warehouses. We will not be able to cut that funding source until the Iraqi government purges its senior ranks of militia loyalists.

The second biggest source of funding, in my experience, is Iraq's foreign neighbors. Iraqis tend to be very nationalistic so the idea of foreign neighbors providing weapons and money to the militia is very distasteful to most. I don't understand why we have not exploited this weakness. Foreign funding and training of the militias remains an open secret within the Coalition. Why isn't this front page news in the Arab world? A public exposure of extensive militia cooperation with Iraq's neighbors could mortally wound the militias by making them appear to be a tool of would-be foreign occupiers.

The Talent Drain: Every few years, someone makes a big deal about all the junior officers leaving the Army. In most cases, this is a natural part of the process and something that the Army can easily compensate for. We need fewer Majors than we do Captains. From my limited perspective, however, I am very concerned this time around. The Army is enduring a brutal deployment cycle (12 months on, 12 months off for many soldiers) with no end in sight. Because of this, we are bleeding talent at an unprecedented rate. Of the hundred or so junior officers in my brigade, I know of only a handful that intend to stay in long enough to command a company. In most cases, it is the most talented officers who are the first to go. I hope that our unit is not typical of the rest of the Army.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of good company commanders to the health of an Army—especially an Army fighting counter-insurgency. Company commanders are the ones who decide every day what risks are worth taking and what are not. They lead most of our most important negotiations with local leaders. They chose who the squad leaders and platoon sergeants will be who lead America's young men in battle. Our company commanders in Iraq made life and death decisions every day. We have to have top-notched junior officers to fill these positions or the Army and our expedition in Iraq are both in great peril.

This is not just a long-term problem. This could have serious short-term consequences in Iraq. If we don't have our best talent commanding our combat company formations on

the ground in Iraq, any strategy that we try to implement over the next few years will be doomed to failure.

Super-FOBs: When we first arrived in Iraq, I was surprised at the size of some of the larger American bases like Balad and Camp Victory in Baghdad. They are small American cities filled with thousands of soldiers who have never left the wire or met an Iraqi. They are guarded by an entire combat battalion because of their size.

Logistics bases are necessary and there is a certain economy that comes with consolidating camps but I think we have lost our balance somewhere. I would estimate that between 10 to 20 percent of the soldiers serving in Iraq actively engage the Iraqi people, aid in reconstruction, or provide security for Iraqi neighborhoods. The rest are involved in logistics, camp management, and staff functions.

Someone, of course, has to deliver the mail and the American Army in Iraq is a logistical marvel that few armies in the world could replicate. However, the next time you hear that we have 150,000 'boots on the ground', I think it is important to recognize that probably somewhere less than 30,000 soldiers actually carry on their mission outside of these huge sanctuaries that we have constructed. When you compare this with an Iraqi population of around 27 million, you can see how daunting this task is.

I am not suggesting that we should send all the mail clerks on patrol. Some units have tried this and found that both their logistics and operations have suffered for it. I do believe that consolidation of bases into large super-FOBs leads to a certain isolationism that causes one to forget why we are all there in the first place. We have division and Corps staffs that approach 1,000 soldiers in size. These large organizations consume a great deal of talent. Some of our best war-fighters, men with extensive combat experience, spend their year in Iraq planning the construction of the new camp dining facility. Somehow, we have lost our balance.

This same tendency toward consolidation has affected our advisory teams for the Iraqi Army. The unit advisory teams that work with the Iraqi Army are our main effort and our best hope for a successful outcome to this fight. Very few of the advisory teams, however, actually live with their Iraqi battalion or brigade. Most teams live on the nearest large American camp and commute to work when conditions permit. I know of one team that had a two-hour commute on very dangerous road from their camp to their Iraqi unit. After they lost a soldier to an IED on that road, they practically stopped visiting the unit all together. By the time we redeployed, that Iraqi unit was all but an auxiliary wing of the Mahdi militia. I am not sure if the advisory team could have stopped this, but their absence certainly helped to accelerate it.

There is no replacement for boots on the ground. The more we consolidate troops into large base camps and allocate our best talent to internal maintenance and support functions instead of winning the fight, the harder it is for us to influence the population and, when necessary, impose our will.

As a final point, I think it is important to step back and look at this from a historical perspective. Despite all our warts, the American Army is doing something pretty amazing in Iraq. For three years, American soldiers, many still in their teens, all volunteers, have faced an enemy that refuses to accept any moral limits on warfare. We have seen the enemy dress in women's clothing, use Iraqi children as human shields, hide weapons in their mosques, and torture the innocent and defenseless. In spite of all this, our young soldiers have shown enormous restraint and even greater compassion. I have

heard Iraqi interpreters marvel that a squad of soldiers would capture a man who, only minutes before, tried to kill them, and bring him unharmed to the detention facility on our camp. This kind of mercy is unheard of in the Arab culture.

Unfortunately, this story will not make the headlines back home. But this is the story of the American soldier in Iraq. It is a story of unprecedented courage, restraint, and compassion for a foreign people. It is a story of the strong trying, against all odds, to protect the weak and defenseless from a dark and hopeless future. I have no idea how the American expedition in Iraq will end. I doubt it will end well. But I do hope that the courage and civility of the American soldiers who fought there will not be forgotten both here and in Iraq.

IN MEMORY OF VETERAN CARL
GENE YOUNG, SR.

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Vietnam Veteran Carl Gene Young, Sr., who passed away Wednesday, January 10, at Denton Regional Medical Center due to a myocardial infarction.

A native of Denton, Texas, Mr. Young served as a city council member for 6 years before retiring in 2001. He was an outspoken, honest spokesman for southeast Denton, and was known as an advocate of affordable housing and diversity in city government. Mr. Young was devoted to those he represented and was genuinely concerned with any issues affecting them. Friends and former colleagues will always remember him for his dedication and loyalty to his community.

Before joining the city council, Mr. Young served in the First Air Cavalry in the Vietnam War. He later organized an annual Easter egg hunt to honor 16 soldiers that were killed on Easter Day 1968. Veteran Carl Young, Sr., was a true patriot and was proud to serve our country.

I worked alongside Mr. Young on the Denton County health executive director selection committee. The committee assignment was one that would affect every citizen in Denton County, and Mr. Young was thoughtful and thorough in his duties. I remember him as insightful and truly caring.

In addition to his role as a politician and soldier, Mr. Young was also a loving husband and father. He deeply cared for his family and friends, and was a strong pillar in our community. I extend my deepest sympathies to his family and friends. Veteran Carl Gene Young, Sr., will be deeply missed and his service to our community will always be greatly appreciated.

MOURNING THE PASSING OF
PRESIDENT GERALD RUDOLPH
FORD

SPEECH OF

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to rise with my colleagues today in support of

House Resolution 15, honoring the late Honorable Gerald Rudolph Ford, the 38th President of the United States.

Here in this Chamber, President Ford served dutifully for 24 years, representing the people of the Fifth District of Michigan from 1949 until his ascension to the Oval Office. As a Congressman, Gerald Ford's warmth, approachability, and affability made him one of the most highly regarded Members of his day.

It was these qualities which would shape Gerald Ford into an excellent House floor leader for his party, a position he held for 8 years until his appointment as the 40th Vice President. During his tenure as minority leader, Gerald Ford set a standard of fairness, diplomacy, and cooperation to which all of us can aspire.

As both Vice President and President, Gerald Ford was called to serve in positions of great responsibility during a troubled time in our Nation's history. Ford accepted his powers and responsibilities with the same steadfast composure and patience for which he had become known as a Congressman.

As a man known for his ability to create consensus, compromise, and conciliation, he was well suited to take the helm of America and navigate the turbulent storm it faced. President Ford's gentle nature helped soothe the deep scars America faced after an arduous period of strife at home and abroad.

Madam Speaker, Gerald Ford served our country with a patient hand, an understanding mind, and a reassuring voice. His time in Congress and in the White House leave behind a legacy of commitment, passion, and comity that we will all remember.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE MART
PANTHERS, STATE 2A DIVISION
II CHAMPIONS

HON. CHET EDWARDS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Mr. EDWARDS. Madam Speaker, I rise today with great pride to congratulate Coach Rusty Nail and the Mart High School Panthers on their 2006 2A Division II State football championship. Their victory is the culmination of years of hard work, dedication and sacrifice and inspires all of us who have followed their progress with great interest. The team and coaching staff have demonstrated outstanding talent and commitment to achieving their goals.

Mart High School has an outstanding history of representing their community and Central Texas with integrity and I am proud to represent such exceptional educators, coaches, and students in Congress.

Winning this State championship is an extraordinary accomplishment that holds lessons that will serve them well throughout their lives. Chief among them is the confidence that comes with knowing that success can be achieved in life when you are willing to set goals and work hard to achieve them.

The Mart Panthers have made history and honored not only their school, but their community, fans and Central Texas by bringing home a State football championship. The Panthers victory brought the State championship trophy home to Mart for the fourth time with an impressive record of 15-1.

Congratulations again to the Mart Panthers on their 2006 2A Division II State football championship. Go Panthers.

IN RECOGNITION OF CHIEF OF POLICE STEVE MCFADDEN'S OUTSTANDING SERVICE AND DEDICATION TO THE CITY OF LEWISVILLE

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Lewisville Chief of Police Steve McFadden. After more than 38 years in municipal service, 34 years of which were served as Chief of Police, Mr. Steve McFadden will retire in February 2007.

Mr. Steve McFadden grew up in a small town outside of Paris, Texas. After graduation from East Lamar High School, he served in the U.S. Army for three years where he discovered his calling into law enforcement. He later received a Bachelor of Science degree from East Texas State University. Due to Mr. McFadden's strong leadership abilities and thorough education, he was promoted to Police Chief within five years of serving as a police officer.

In November of 1977, Mr. McFadden became Chief of Police in Lewisville, Texas. At that time there were only 27 sworn officers, a force that has grown drastically to include 136 officers today. The crime rates in Lewisville have been kept low due largely to the strong cooperation of the police department. Chief McFadden believed that one of the most integral aspects that contributed to their department success was honesty and trust. He believed that his job as police chief was not any more important than those jobs of the officers and dispatchers. Mr. McFadden inspired a sense of pride and integrity in his staff. He was one of the most experienced and respected police chiefs in Texas, and his retirement is viewed as a great loss to the department and to the community.

The decision to retire was not an easy one for Mr. McFadden, as he will truly miss his colleagues and serving our community as Lewisville Chief of Police. He does, however, look forward to spending more time with his wife, Judy McFadden, his two daughters, his son, and his granddaughter.

It is with great honor that I recognize Mr. Steve McFadden for decades of hard work and selfless dedication given to the citizens of Lewisville, Texas. I am proud to represent him in Washington, and his service will be set as a standard of devotion and true leadership, one that will never be forgotten.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE 2007
“NUESTRO ORGULLO LATINO”
CELEBRATION AND ITS HONOREES

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an event, the “Nuestro