



The Concierge of the Battlefield

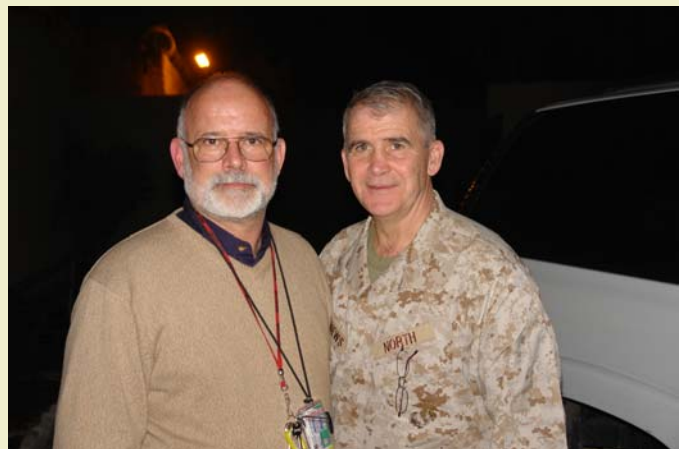
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"That's what we are. That's what we do. We are the concierge of the battlefield," affirms Jack Holly, the still erect postured, retired Marine colonel. "When travelers require something while staying in hotel to whom do they go? The concierge of course! Thus, that is what we are to this effort here in Iraq. If something is needed we provide it, from notepads to police cars, grease to guns."

This massive array of country building materiel - between \$10 and \$15 billion - comes from a myriad of sources. Among them are monies from the Developmental Funds Iraq, Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund, Iraqi Stabilization and Iraq Security Force Fund, as well as contributions from donor nations, NATO and items left in country from the "Oil for Food" program.

The 60-year-old Director of Logistics for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region Division (USACE-GRD) is a U.S. Naval Academy graduate of the rather famous class of 1968. Among its alumni, this august group includes Lt. Col. Oliver North, former Secretary of the Navy and recently elected U.S. Sen. James Webb, a Commandant of the Marine Corps and two Chiefs of Naval Operations.

No slouch among this group, even seated at his desk, Holly's command demeanor and ramrod appearance – other than the short gray beard – still reeks "Semper Paratus" pride in the Corps.



Both having served their country from Viet Nam to Iraq, Marine warriors Col. (ret.) Jack Holly and Lt. Col. (ret.) Ollie North briefly enjoyed a few moments together during North's recent visit to the USACE-GRD Logistics Movement Control Center.

This man who effectively led the Marine logistics effort in both Somalia and during Operation "Desert Storm" has now been at the head of the helm of the Iraq Reconstruction logistics mission for nearly three years.

Today, however, he serves as a civilian, but in private his animated talk is often peppered with colorful - and sometimes salty - Marine metaphors.

An example of the latter arises early in a conversation about the components that comprise the affecting of logistics in Iraq. Holly explains that there are five integral components of what constitutes the ultimate price for any manner of goods, be it a pencil or a bus. "While I have to use the acronym carefully," he explains with a grin of pure mischief, "reality dictates that 'product price' is driven by five core components: shipping, handling, inventory, transportation and security. I call it The ***** Factor" – clearly enunciating that Marine Drill Sergeant expletive with a look of boyish delight on his face.



For each of those five letters he has a multitude of apropos logistics related anecdotes:

Tracking one of the over 600 convoys monitored monthly by the Logistics Movement Control Center are, civilian attired, Holly with three of his logistics officers Marine Capt. Mike Pinson, and Air Forces Captains Mark Slate and Chad Nichols.

Concerning **shipping**, he speaks of the gargantuan amount of cargo space required for the 22,000 vehicles being issued to the Iraq government, that are already in-country and the 5,000-6,000 that are still coming in-country through the port of Umm Qasr. "This includes ambulances, police vehicles, fire trucks and all manner of army rolling stock," he explains, adding, "and folks should know that the ships that bring them in comply with American Flag Carrier requirements – standards to which less than five percent of the world's ships can boast."

Regarding **handling** Holly describes how every item is carefully inspected to ensure it is what was ordered, is complete and fully operational. He explains that in 2003-04 many items were being ordered to be sent to "the Baghdad Warehouse" when no such location actually existed. The creation of these storage facilities was no simple task, particularly in light of the fact that no money had been designated for their construction.

Showing how his operation provides total accountability to the U.S. taxpayers, he then discussed the **inventory** process and how virtually all items that come into Iraq must first go to and then through one of the 31 structures at the Abu Ghuraib Warehouse – a facility nearly seven times larger than the Pentagon. "If one of the Iraqi ministries requires it, we probably have it. You name it, we've got it. If we don't, why, I bet we can get it. We're in the service industry and remember, I'm an old Marine. We don't know the word 'no' he exclaims with a twinkle in his eye.

Transportation brings out a more serious side of Holly. Growing somber he quietly explains how Iraqis have "stepped forward" in driving the trucks and providing the convoy security. "To date, he states," the personal anguish clearly mirrored on his face, "we've had 750 convoys attacked, with 119 men killed and 334 injured. Don't tell me that Iraqis aren't committed to helping grow this country."

In the realm of **security** Holly explains the obvious, "As security needs increase, so do, of course, insurance costs. And relevant to this, he recounted how 20 percent of all of the attacks on his convoys since commencement of his logistics efforts, took place in last September. "One need not be a rocket scientist to see that those opposed to our efforts to help Iraqis create a democracy here understood what would make lead news back in the U.S. just prior to the elections," he notes.

In 2003, already highly experienced and labeled a logistical sage by many, Holly was invited by Adm. David Nash - then in charge of the Project and Contracting Office portion of the Coalition Provisional Authority - to join his team.

Now, in 2006, one marvels at what has grown into one of the largest logistical operations in history and all that has been accomplished by the 73 military and civilian members who, over the last three years, have rotated through the eight lead operational billets under the "old Colonel."

He shuns such praise deferring comments back to mission, "All we are striving to accomplish here would fall to sand if there were no effective logistical program. To use the words of a brother at arms and a former Commandant of the Marine Corp, Gen. Robert Barrow, 'Amateurs talk about tactics, but professionals study logistics'."