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Updated 18 Jul 2003


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
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**Presenter:** Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz      Monday, July 7, 2003

## Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz Interview with Los Angeles Times

(Interview with Los Angeles Times - Doyle McManus and Esther Schraeder)

Wolfowitz: This is Paul Wolfowitz.

McManus: Mr. Secretary, it's Doyle McManus.

Wolfowitz: Hi. Sorry I'm hard to pin down here.

McManus: Do you mind if I put you on a speaker so Esther Schraeder can join us?

Wolfowitz: Go ahead.

McManus: Thank you.

Schraeder: Hi, Mr. Secretary.

Wolfowitz: Hi, Esther. How are you?

Schraeder: Fine.



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McManus: As you know, what we and our colleagues have been doing for I guess about the last ten days is looking back at the planning process for post-war stabilization in Iraq. Basically to try and answer the same kind of questions that everybody else is trying to answer. Let me just go ahead and tell you what the material we have gathered has in it. These are not the conclusions of the piece, but these are the issues that it's grappling with. I'll just lay out what they are in a way that -- Obviously, as you know, there are plenty of people who are happy to say "I told you so" who had some part in the process at some stage and feel their advice wasn't given. So that's what we're trying to sift out and weigh everything in its proper place.

But the four principle issues that seem to be raised are, number one, was the planning adequate and was it started early enough?

Number two, on the degree of looting which set back stabilization, Garner did an interview with us and said he had not foreseen the looting. There was not much of a plan to deal with the degree of looting that left ministries and infrastructure as far behind as it was.

Number three, the question of whether the level of hostile action we're looking at now was foreseen or not.

Finally, of course the question of whether there was a tradeoff in terms of manpower, in terms of the ability to do policing afterwards.

These are not original questions so I thought I'd lay them out for you right there.

Wolfowitz: Okay. How do you want to go?

McManus: Do you want to take them in order?

Wolfowitz: Okay.

McManus: Planning. That's a tough one for us to judge of course because we're looking at different parts of the elephant from people who were at different places at the same time. So as far as they know the planning didn't start until Garner was hired in January. I take it the planning started significantly earlier than that.

Wolfowitz: It did, and I sort of remember back roughly in the late summer, early fall timeframe a lot of planning, a lot of briefings about the post-war situation,

and a lot of it focused, as did quite a bit of Garner's effort, on things that happily didn't happen. I think part of the reason they didn't happen is because the plan proceeded to be successful as quickly as it was successful, and that, in turn, I think saved a lot of Iraqi lives as well as American lives. It left some things in its wake because we did go fast. I would not for a minute in hindsight go back and say gee, we should have gone slower so we could have had more forces built up behind us to control areas that we went past.

The fact is we put a lot of thought and even contracts into planning to repair oilfields that we expected to be devastated. We put a lot of thought, and again contracts into how to put out oil fires in the north which would have been poisoning the whole environment with hydrogen sulfide. A lot of thought into, and again preparations, physical preparations, into planning to feed hundreds of thousands of displaced persons that would have been the result of what was feared to be largescale urban fighting. Those were the three big ones and none of those happened. And I think in large part they didn't happen because in the first couple of instances the enemy didn't have time to react before they were basically undone; and in the second instance because we managed to bring them down without that kind of "Fortress Baghdad" disaster that had been so widely predicted.

Schraeder: How much planning did you put into the prospect of looting, the prospect of persistent and catastrophic, devastating attacks on the electrical and oil power grids? In other words, the things that are facing U.S. forces there today.

Wolfowitz: I think a lot of CENTCOM's planning on that score assumed that we would have an effective police force more or less intact, an indigenous police force, and that we would even be able to enlist some significant numbers of Iraqi military manpower to help with the security task. Those are assumptions that turned out not to be accurate.

By the way, one ought to be clear that planning in a situation like this is not putting together a railway timetable or an exact itinerary for driving from Washington to New York. You inevitably end up calling audibles. I recently saw history of sort of a chronology of the first 12 months in Germany after World War II. This was a situation we had four years to prepare for. Clay and McCoy were calling one audible after another, including, by the way, on the question of how far they had to go in terms of dismantling the old Nazi party structure. They went a lot further eventually than they had originally planned.

So you get to a situation like this and you inevitably have to make some judgment calls, and clearly one of the things that is now getting a lot of priority is

training up an Iraqi police force to do those functions.

McManus: In Monday morning quarterbacking, a lot of people said gee, why didn't they just use the 3rd ID to stop the looting. Was there a judgment call there or is that just nuts?

Wolfowitz: I guess a couple of things. And by the way, it seems to me it's fair to point out, let's see, we crossed the Kuwaiti border March 20th, so April, May, June. We're three and a half months since the war began and less than three months since major combat ended. It's pretty early in the process. We're dealing with 34 years of a devastating, destructive reign of terror and a lot of what we're coping with is that. So that perspective is needed.

Someday maybe we'll get a better fix on exactly how much of this looting was random lawlessness and how much of it was targeted by elements of the old regime. It seems increasingly clear, and I don't claim to have ground truth on this. I'm partly reacting to some very good news reports including one by National Geographic. But it would appear that the so-called looting of the National Museum took place long before the war even began. It wasn't looting, it was organized, and a lot of the claims that were made at the time about the looting were wildly exaggerated.

McManus: Electricity and water. Is there any --

Wolfowitz: The electricity, some of that really does look like organized sabotage. We are dealing, and I suppose one might say if the war had been longer and bloodier we wouldn't have so many surviving remnants of the old regime but I wouldn't make that tradeoff.

This is like a large gangland operation that hijacked a whole country for three decades. There are thousands--which is not a large number in a country of 20 million, but it's not a small number--thousands of bitter-enders from that group who are clearly determined--not determined—hopeful, that they can somehow drive us out. They're not going to succeed.

Schraeder: On the question of planning, can I ask you to help us with process, help us in this [naga] that we're trying to tell. We know that in late February, February 21st and 22nd, there was a series of exercises or wargames that came to be known as the Rock Drill at the National Defense University. And we know that it identified holes, especially on security and apparently did what it was supposed to do. We know that this brought planners together for a meeting to really plan in great detail for the post-war period.

Our reporting does not show us any previous meeting of planners to get into that sort of detail. Is that correct? And if it's not correct can you tell us when and where previous meetings occurred?

Wolfowitz: The NDU exercise was Garner's way of checking out the planning that he had done previously. I can't remember exactly when he was brought in but it was sometime in January. Again, as far as I know this was the first time in any of the operations we've conducted over the last 10 or 15 years or probably ever, where we actually had a post-war office stood up before the war began. I shudder to think what would have happened if we had had that office stood up in late November or early December and the stories had come out that the Pentagon is assuming a war.

McManus: You mean in terms of diplomatic impact?

Wolfowitz: Yeah. I mean we were constrained about how far you go in doing things that could easily create an impression that you foreclose the diplomatic option.

At any rate, Garner came in, did a lot of planning. I remember hearing about the so-called Rock Drill but it was one in a series of planning events that were moving at pretty high speed there.

Schraeder: Is it fair to say, I don't know --

Wolfowitz: By the way, let me just say one thing too. I know one of the things that was specifically discussed, it's interesting, this is again in the category of something that didn't happen. Maybe in hindsight -- well, I won't say it. Let me just say on background...

Wolfowitz: Back on the record.

There was thought given to the fact that we'd be bypassing or passing through some large population areas and there was the potential for really bloody retribution against the old regime. We haven't seen that anywhere. As I say, if anything it's been the old regime that's exacting its pound of flesh. There was a lot of anticipation of large ethnic conflict problems in Northern Iraq among Kurds and Turks and Arabs and a lot of thought and planning went into that. Even before the major combat ended we were working with CENTCOM to put in a team to go in there to begin a process for legal adjudication of those property claims. That's another thing that didn't happen and I think in part it didn't happen

because we did give a lot of thought to managing the Turks and managing the Kurds and beginning to put a civil process in place.

Schraeder: So before the Rock Drill there was no sort of wargaming or exercise that gamed out what the post-war options would be?

Wolfowitz: I can't -- A lot of work goes on in a lot of places. That would assume that nothing took place in CENTCOM. I doubt that very much. It would assume that nothing took place in Garner's office, which is a large office. In fact I think the Rock Drill was a sort of a test of what they were thinking through.

McManus: Was your office or someone else's office overseeing or looking in on CENTCOM's planning before January?

Wolfowitz: Basically the mechanism for reviewing the CENTCOM plans was basically Franks', directly to the Secretary usually or I guess almost always accompanied by General Myers, General Pace and myself and various staff who would sometimes be there. But -- Let me say this on background and then I'll come back on the record...

I guess I'll go back on the record now and be appropriately more cautious.

McManus: At this point, and you're right, it's only a few weeks later, though, a lot of the talking heads are saying well, there was that planning process. It focused almost entirely on the war plan, did it focus sufficiently on the post-war plan?

Wolfowitz: I think it focused on a lot of things. If you want to say that Franks put his preponderant effort into those things where large numbers of Americans' lives were at risk, I think that's probably the case. I wouldn't want his focus to be somewhere else. But I think he really looked at the whole range.

Let me go on background again, okay?...

Schraeder: Are we back on the record?

Wolfowitz: Yes.

McManus: Let me re-ask that same question about Ba'thist hostile actions on the record because it's a key point and I'll ask it in a deliberately provocative way.

Lots of people are running around reporting your old words about American

troops being greeted as liberators, and now we're finding that there's a significant, or at least a troublesome minority of the population that isn't behaving that way. Did we misunderstand what was going to happen?

Wolfowitz: Look, you have what, 7,000-8,000 members of Fedayeen Saddam; you have 15,000 members of the Special Security Organization. This is a country that was ruled by a gang of terrorist criminals and they're still around. They are threatening Iraqis and killing Americans. That doesn't mean the population wants them. I think -- certainly in the north and in the south where these people are much less strong the evidence is very clear, but I think even in the Sunni areas of the country the overwhelming preponderance of the population welcomes the change and we were greeted as liberators. All over the country we were greeted as liberators. We continue to be greeted as liberators. It is important to convince people that Saddam is finished and he or his clique, if he's not alive, are trying to convey the opposite impression to people.

But first of all, I do think it's fair to say that we were accurate in how the population would receive us. I think we were also closer to accurate in what the general effects would be throughout the region in the Arab world. The people who were opposed to this action predicted all kinds of disasters in Arab countries. None of those happened. They predicted that this would somehow destroy the peace process. It's had the opposite effect. They predicted that Turkey would intervene and we'd have trouble with Turkey. That didn't happen.

I would say if you do the inventory of assumptions that we operated on, we came out pretty well and I think part of it also is because General Franks had a plan that emphasized speed and speed prevents a lot of bad things from happening. It leaves you with some holes you fill in behind. I'd much rather fill in the holes behind than not have had that speedy result.

Schraeder: As you just said, nobody's perfect and different judgments and assessments were made that did not turn out to be the case. And as you said, much of the pre-war planning seems to have concentrated on scenarios that did not occur.

I've got two questions. One is just kind of the man on the street, why wouldn't it have been obvious that looters would start going in and pulling wires out of walls? Shouldn't we have been prepared for that scenario?

The second question is could the process of integrating plans that really came together at the NDU exercises, could it have begun sooner, and would that have helped to game out some of these different scenarios?

Wolfowitz: You said several things. First of all, the things we planned for that didn't happen didn't not happen because we made faulty assumptions. They didn't not happen because I think we prevented them. It was not a faulty assumption to be concerned about large numbers of displaced persons and we know that they had explosives rigged to blow up oilfields. But we also know that the speed of our advance and the kinds of warnings that we'd issued to people had an effect to prevent it from happening.

We know that we got to the oil platforms in the Gulf before they had a chance to rig the explosives. So there was a large element -- It's amazing actually, that Franks was able to achieve surprise in an attack that some people would have said was forecast a year in advance, but that surprise, and then the speed following on the surprise, prevented these things. It's absolutely wrong to say that we planned on the basis of wrong assumptions. We planned to deal with things that I think were realities.

On the business of looting, it's easy to say gee, why didn't you have some plan to deal with law and order in a city the size of Los Angeles? I suppose the answer is if we'd waited three more months and given up the surprise and marched slowly and deliberately into Baghdad we could have marched along with a large enough force to establish security in Baghdad. We got there with what we had. The so-called forces of local law and order just kind of collapsed. There's not a single plan that would have dealt with that.

But then finally, you made a -- Let me do this on background...

I'm going to have to sign off. I'm sorry.

McManus: Many thanks.

Wolfowitz: Thanks.



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