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Interview with MAJ Pete Fedak



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Abstract

From March to November 2004, Major Pete Fedak led a 10-man team that served as advisors to the 6th Battalion, Iraqi Army, training this unit from formation through its participation in Operation Phantom Fury (also known as Al Fajr): the November 2004 combined arms assault that retook the city of Fallujah. In the months preceding this operation, the unit received individual and collective training and began conducting “real-world”, company-level combat patrols in and around Kirkush. Upon being sent to Fallujah, 6th Battalion was tasked with perimeter route security, running traffic control points in concert with U.S. forces and, later, battalion-level cordon and search missions. “The guys that actually came to Fallujah,” said Fedak, “they were some great soldiers. Some of the things they did, we would never expect our soldiers to do. It really showed a lot of intestinal fortitude.” In this interview, Fedak discusses his advisory experience in great detail, expounding on everything from equipment issues and establishing rapport to the “major emotional events” of paydays and leave. He also shares candid insights into the “very minimal guidance” his team received prior to deploying and offers a number of recommendations for how future advisor teams could be better prepared, especially concerning the cultural awareness aspect. “I think it’s the wrong answer to just say, ‘Go over and figure it out on the fly,’” Fedak insists. “Let’s give them some grounding, and the main focus should be cultural: not the American looking glass but the Iraqi looking glass.”

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Interview with MAJ Pete Fedak

15 February 2006



JM: My name is John McCool [JM] and I'm with the Operational Leadership Experiences Project at the Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I'm interviewing Major Pete Fedak [PF] on his experiences during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM [OIF]. Also present is Mr. Matt Matthews [MM], also of the Combat Studies Institute, who will be asking questions as well. Today's date is 15 February 2006 and this is an unclassified interview. Before we begin, Pete, if at any time you feel we're entering classified territory, please couch your response in terms that avoid revealing any classified information. And if classification requirements prevent you from responding, simply say you're not able to answer. Could you please start off by giving us a brief thumbnail sketch of your military career and then we'll focus on your deployment to OIF?

PF: I came in to the Army in 1993. I attended IOBC [Infantry Officer Basic Course], Ranger School, commissioned in the infantry. My first assignment was in Korea. I went over and was a platoon leader and executive officer of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry up at Camp Giant along the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone]. After that, I came back to Fort Benning, spent my time there from 1995 through 1997 at 1-19 Infantry, basic training on Sand Hill as the company executive officer for Bravo Company. Then I attended the Infantry Officer Advanced Course. After that, I went to Fort Hood from 1997 through 2001. I spent time there as an S3 Air, Bravo Company commander, battalion S3 and HHC commander for 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, part of 2nd Brigade, 4th ID [Infantry Division]. At that time, I went overseas to Hohenfels, Germany as an OC [Observer Controller] in the summer of 2001 and stayed in Germany through summer 2005 when I came here for CGSC [Command and General Staff College]. In Hohenfels, I was a scout platoon OC, rifle company OC, S3 Air OC, and the Training, Analysis and Feedback Facility advisor to the senior task force OC. While I was in Hohenfels, a tasking came down for two 10-man teams to deploy to Iraq to train Iraqi Army soldiers. The tasking was supposed to be from March of 2004 for a period of approximately six months, and I was selected to be the lead for one of those two teams that were sent down. So myself and nine men went down to train the Iraqi Army.

JM: Now, how did you prepare yourself for this assignment? Did your OC experience help you get this position?

PF: As far as getting the position, the taskings went to Hohenfels and they were assigned to two of the OC teams to fill. Part of the intent was to keep the teams together for unit integrity so as not to, if you will, pull guys from all across Hohenfels, so it was guys who had already worked together and had some level of cohesion. As far as being selected, it was something that I had asked to do, volunteered for, and I was lucky enough to be chosen as the lead for one of those teams.

JM: Can you describe the team training you went through prior to going, and also, then, the regimen that you put these Iraqi soldiers through?

PF: It's kind of interesting. When the tasking came down, it was pretty early in the formation of advisor teams. At the time, they were calling us ASTs, Advisor Support Teams. The message I saw that tasked us to go to Iraq to do this was pretty vague. It instructed that the 10-man team would consist of a major, two captains and seven NCOs. One of those NCOs would be the team sergeant - preferably a master sergeant - but instead I took a very senior E-7 who he did a great job. There were six additional E-7 sergeants first class. As far as the guidance, though, there was very minimal as far as what exactly we would be doing down range, except for that we'd be training Iraqi Army from formation through preparations to going into an operational status. Our understanding at the time, to put it in layman's terms, would be to conduct basic training with Iraqis from the time they showed up - similar to Sand Hill -through graduation. And then additionally, which is different than Sand Hill, instead of just doing individual soldier training, we would take them through squad-level, platoon-level collective tasks - time permitting - up through company and battalion staff functions. These are obviously pretty complex tasks to accomplish in a six-month period. So that was our understanding. Like I said, it was pretty vague at the time. There was really no explanation of, "These are the sort of the things that you'll do by this method of instruction." Our 10-man team generically prepared for movement to Iraq just doing individual soldier skills: first aid, shooting, those types of things. As far as any thoughts about operational-type missions, we kind of thought that that would be beyond our purview. The tasking was a basic training-type tasking. So, that said, we had been informed of the tasking, I want to say it was the end of 2003, maybe December. After that preparation, our final orders were to deploy the beginning of March; and if I remember correctly, we flew out on 15 March 2004 from Ramstein Air Base and we went down to Kuwait. We were the lead team of those two teams. The other team that eventually wound up being advisors to the 7th Battalion left approximately a week or two after us. Is this on track?

JM: Yeah, this is great.

MM: This is actually perfect stuff because we're also getting ready to write something on the training of indigenous forces.

PF: I just wanted to make sure I wasn't going down too far down the road here with the details. So then we arrived in Kuwait. And once again, the training mission was not really a set mission at this time. So when we showed up, there was a lot of confusion as far as, "Who are you guys with? Who are you assigned to?" At the time, we were working with the unit called CMATT.

JM: The Coalition Military Assistance Training Team.

PF: Right, out of Baghdad. So we were contacting them on the phone from Kuwait. They had figured out, "Well, okay, you need to get a flight up to Baghdad with your team. Once you land there at BIAP [Baghdad International Airport], we'll get in contact with you and we'll get you squared away and figure out where you're going from there." So I caught a C-130 from Kuwait up to BIAP. We landed and some of the CMATT fellows linked up with us. One of the captains and I went to the palace, as it's called, in the Green Zone. The CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority] headquarters there. I talked to CMATT and tried to understand a little bit about what they expected that we would be doing in country. The next day, my 10-man team was moved from BIAP to Taji, Iraq. Taji was really the first time that we started to see the training teams - or people that were associated with the training teams. There was a base structure

there, the senior guy being a lieutenant colonel, and he had a sergeant major and then the requisite fellows underneath him, and that was sort of a CMATT forward. So CMATT proper was back at the palace; CMATT forward was out at Taji. I think what wound up happening later was that they really became sort of the RSOI [Reception, Staging, Onward-movement and Integration] for advising teams. They would come in and get their ground rules on, "Here's what's going on as an advisor." And then they would get farmed out to whatever unit they were going to go be advisors for. When we showed up, it was pretty much the early stages. There was one battalion that was at Taji, if I remember correctly, that was there and operational. I want to say it was the 2nd Battalion, Iraqi Army, and they had an advisory team that was operating out of Taji with us. When I say Taji, it was adjacent to 1st Armored Division, which I think was at Camp Victory. Outside of that wire, there was a separate area for the 2nd Battalion Iraqis and the CMATT fellows, which is where we fell under. So we went out there, stayed with them. I think now there's something called the Phoenix Academy of Taji. I don't know if you've heard of this, but I believe it's supposed to be like a little training program for new advisors coming into country. Well, when we showed up, there really wasn't a Phoenix program per se. The sergeant major that I spoke of, he kind of said, "Here's where we are at." And there were about three days worth of classes - and I use the word "classes" loosely - to try to get us spun up on what was happening with the advisor teams, to give us a little bit of flavor for Iraqi culture, a little bit of language. Understand that this was the only thing available or set up at the time; the sergeant major was doing his best for us. And then we were in a holding pattern, basically, until they could figure out which battalion we were to link up with and work with. Because at this time, they were still forming them. There was a lot of flux as far as which posts would form the bases for the different training locations. So we were at Taji for two weeks, because we went up to Kirkush on 1 April, which is my anniversary, so I remember that. While we were there, the other advisor team out of Germany came and met up with us at Taji also, and we also met up with the 5th Battalion advisory guys - which is that fellow I referenced in the Bing West book, Major Mike Zacchea, who turned out to be the lead advisor for 5th Battalion. What finally ended up hashing out was that these three teams - the Marine team, led by Major Mike Zacchea; the one Army team, led by myself; and then the other Army team, led by Major Jim Lechner - would form the nucleus of the 3rd Brigade teams, and we would fill, respectively, the 5th, 6th and 7th Iraqi Army Battalions that all fell under the 3rd Brigade. There was additionally a lieutenant colonel, then promoted to colonel - Toby Hale - who was located at Taji also. He would be the advisor to the 3rd Brigade. Once we all met up at Taji, formed up, then we moved to Kirkush. There was some controversy about whether we would train at Taji or Kirkush. The final decision was made for us to move to Kirkush and conduct training out there. On 1 April, we moved basically the whole brigade's worth of advisors from Taji up to Kirkush. When we got up there, Kirkush was a pretty good-sized base - probably five kilometers by about 15 kilometers in size - a small portion of that having an American unit contingent on it, which was the 30th Enhanced Separate Brigade out of, I want to say, North Carolina. But 30th ESB fell under 1st ID. They were one of the brigades operating in 1st ID's footprint. They had a small portion of the camp. The rest of the camp fell under a Marine major who worked for CMATT and who was the base commander, Major Mike Manning. He was responsible for getting us in, getting us settled, and he was the one who played musical units and shuffling the different units around as they arrived. Space was limited and there was only so much room on the camp as facilities were being upgraded, so they couldn't use all the facilities at a given time. He had to sort of shuffle people around. On the camp, a battalion of Iraqi Army was there. It already had an advisor team and had already finished basic training.

They were operational. It was 1st Battalion or 4th Battalion, I can't remember right now off the top of my head. Additionally, the ITB, the Iraqi Training Battalion, was located on Kirkush – basic training for Iraqi soldier replacements. They weren't actually doing full units; they would train these guys and then they would fill shortages in the battalions that existed at the time, which was 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions. At the time, they were called IAF, Iraqi Armed Forces, but then later transitioned to the IIF, Iraqi Intervention Forces. So you've got ITB, you've got the one operational battalion, and then we show up. It's 1 April. The plan was to bring in the leadership, initially, for the battalions, and they were staged sequentially. So the training was staggered, with the first battalion formed being the 5th, the last battalion being the 7th, and we were kind of in the middle. If I remember right, it was around the end of April when we received our leadership, which consisted of all the officers that were assigned to the battalion, and I think the NCOs starting coming about two weeks later. The intent was to try and get the officers together, figure out the training plan – and we got a very generic schedule from CMATT as far as what tasks needed to be accomplished. It was sort of an example calendar of what this basic training would consist of. We kind of took that and modified it based on range availability, moving things around. It was kind of a structure of what needed to occur, for the most part. The intent was to get the Iraqi leadership together and get them spun up so they could run the basic training. I'll speak to our battalion, 6th Battalion, because I know our battalion the best. 6th Battalion was at its peak at about 1,000 guys. So for 10 advisors we couldn't really run the basic training. We had to advise a core leadership to run it and then use them accordingly.

MM: What was the background of these Iraqi officers that showed up? Where did they come from? Were they former army officers or were they selected? Were they Sunni or Shi'ites?

PF: I can't definitively say that all of them were former army, but I want to say that the majority had some military experience as officers. As far as the recruitment, the recruitment for officer, NCO and enlisted guys was handled at CMATT or at another unit, which wasn't part of my purview. My understanding was they sort of interviewed, vetted and tried to figure out who was going to fill which position based on experience. I know that a lot of the officers who showed up had been assigned at a rank probably one below their formal pay grade: so if they were a lieutenant colonel, they came to us filling a major's position. For example, the battalion commander was a full colonel and he showed up as a lieutenant colonel, and he was a full colonel in the Iraqi Army in the old days. As far as the ethnic breakdown, it was a mix. The demographics tried to mirror Iraq, so we had a proportion of Sunni, Shi'a and Kurds that were approximately comparable to the population. So the bulk of our guys were Shi'a; the minority were Kurd and Sunni. I can't remember what the exact percentages were, but it pretty much mirrored the demographics. The intent was to keep it diverse and not just Shi'a or just Sunni. And a lot of our Kurdish officers had been officers that had served with the *peshmerga* up in what they consider the Kurdistan region in the north of Iraq. It was a diversity.

MM: Was there any concern on your part that there might have been some anti-Iraqi forces that maybe slipped in and were able to get into the army? Was there ever any concern that you might be working with somebody that had finagled his way in?

PF: Absolutely. That was something that you had to keep in mind. And understand, that was the very early stages; the vetting process can only be so thorough initially, especially when

you're trying to form entire battalions. So, yeah, you had to treat things as suspect. One of the big issues that the battalion commander and I would struggle with was operational security. In other words: How much can we release to what level of the men as far as what missions we're going on? When is the level too low and when do we assume too much risk telling too many people? There was always a concern that either anti-Iraqi forces were in there, or people that just have ulterior motives. Some of our Kurdish officers had left, and this was across the board. We had attrition across the board. For example, the Kurdish officers, the discussion was that if they left, they were leaving to go back to the *peshmerga* and bring some of those lessons learned and some of the information about our training system. But not to single out the Kurds, because, across the board, we had Kurdish, Shi'a and Sunni all go AWOL [Absent without Leave] at various point throughout the training, all the way right up through operations in Fallujah in November 2004.

JM: Talking about possible infiltration, did you have any actual incidents of that?

PF: No, we never had anything concrete, where something occurred and we were like, "Yes, this guy had infiltrated and caused this to occur." Once again, we had guys slip away in the middle of the night, don't know where they went off to, what sector of society they turned to. But as far as anything happening per se against 6th Battalion that really stood out as being tied to infiltration, no, I didn't have any experiences of that, but it was something you had to keep in your mind and think about.

MM: How'd you work paydays over there if there really weren't any banks? Did you have to give them a couple days off to take their money home?

PF: Yes. Payday and leave are major emotional events with the Iraqi Army, and we laugh about it as Americans, because for an American soldier you have direct deposit. Your wife has access to your funds. As you said, there are no banks over there so we think, "What's the big deal?" Payday activities in the Army have dropped away. There are no payday activities. Your direct deposit goes in, life goes on, come to work and shut up. In Iraq, it is a major emotional event. What happened is leave would have to be cycled over a four-week period. So when the soldiers signed up to be in the Iraqi Army, they signed up for three weeks of work and then one week of leave, and that was the cycle they were supposed to be on. The problem with that - you can kind of guess this - is we can't say the whole battalion gets to go home. And ultimately this is part of the conflict that occurs. I'm kind of jumping ahead now, but remember when the ministries got turned over to Iraqi control in 2004. It was either June or July.

JM: It was in late June, I believe.

PF: Yeah, June. It was a surprise that we did it early, that Paul Bremer turned it over a couple days early. But anyway, payday was basically "X" day towards the end of the month, give or take a few days on each end. So the money would have to come from Baghdad, it would come to Kirkush on a convoy, and when it would show up that was the time when everybody in 3rd Brigade would get paid. The problem was, that's when everybody wanted to go home. "I got money, so I want to go home for a week to pay my family." Well, 6th Battalion consisted of six companies. You had a headquarters company, four line companies - 1st Company, 2nd Company, 3rd and 4th - and then we had a transportation company. So six companies, and the

intent was to cycle it so every week one of the four line companies would be on leave and a quarter of headquarters and a quarter of the transportation company would be on leave. The problem was that, right after payday, you had some guys that would say, "I'm not waiting for my leave," because it would rotate a little bit. If you can imagine, 52 weeks in a year and eventually it would rotate where you'd be the guy that would get paid and get to go right on leave. But if you happened to be the guy that got paid and then had perhaps three weeks to wait until you got to go home, you might say, "Forget this, I've got to run." We had that, and sometimes a guy would go home and then come back, and it was a hard decision whether to take him back. Is this a good soldier or do we need to say, "Hey, you went AWOL; you're out of the army." So those are things you had to take into consideration. So pay was huge. And also trust. I know the Army is going to put money into my account on the last day of the month. That's going to go in there. There's no mystery about it. For the Iraqis, though, if the convoy was running late, which often occurred, they're working on good faith now. "Where's my money for my work?" "Well, you're going to get paid." Well, if you don't have that trust from the past, and if the Iraqi government in the past used to not pay their soldiers, there's that level of, "Well, I'm going to stay around here and you're not going to pay me, and then you're going to tell me to go home and I'm going to get screwed out of a month's worth of pay." So that was a huge issue.

JM: How did you go about building rapport with these guys and establishing trust, of you by them and vice versa?

PF: That's a long process, and it takes a lot longer in the Middle Eastern culture to establish that rapport than in America, where you're forced to work in teams for better or worse. You run into the same problems, but there it's a much slower process. We tried to do habitual advisor relationships. I had myself, two captains, a senior NCO and then six sergeants first class. Those six sergeants first class acted as habitual advisors to the six companies. So they were the guys who always stayed and always worked for that company and was their mentor, if you will. And initially, when the leadership showed up, they'd work with that leadership, then bring the NCOs in, and then when the privates came, hopefully they had a little bit of that rapport built. The NCO piece was hard because the Iraqi officers don't look at NCOs the same way American officers look at NCOs. So there wasn't that level of trust and there wasn't that level of confidence as far as what could be delegated to an NCO. The two captains basically split duties within the staff functions of S1 through S4. So one captain worked the S1 and the S3 jobs, and the other captain worked strictly the S4 job. That may seem a little backwards but, at the time, conditions were very austere being one of the first units that stood up, so supply and logistics was a major emotional event. Just to get these guys a bed to sleep in, shaving kits, the bare necessities of life, and then additionally get uniforms and equipment. So that was a full-time job for one of the captains. The other captain worked S1 so, obviously, pay was a huge issue, accountability with AWOLs, and additionally he was the operations guy and would do a lot of the operational planning. Those two captains could also float and kind of be mentors. We split up the companies. I want to say the S1/S3 captain, Captain Chris Clay, had Transportation Company and then 1st and 3rd Companies. And then Captain Mike Sullivan, who was the S4 captain, he had 2nd, 4th and Headquarters. The short version is that they split over three companies to hopefully give that Iraqi captain/major, that company commander, give him an American captain mentor that he could talk to about officer stuff. He had that embedded sergeant first class advisor, but someone else who could give him another perspective. And

then myself and my senior sergeant, Sergeant First Class Richard W. Smith, we worked battalion integration, battalion commander, battalion sergeant major, and then basically through the whole spectrum of staff functions down to talking to company commanders and trying to get companies up and running. Anyway, does that help with rapport? I think over time we grew closer. Fast forward from forming up in April to actually rolling out to Fallujah in November 2004, which was approximately seven months later, that core group was pretty tight. There was a high level of respect both ways. My respect grew quite a bit for the Iraqi troops and what they've gone through and understanding their cultural aspects, which is something that I can talk about for a while. Understanding their aspects and how to look at it from their point of view, versus always imposing an American point of view.

JM: You talked about this proportional representation - you had Shi'ites and Sunnis and Kurds - were they able to get along well, especially the Kurds with the Iraqis, considering their history. Were they able to be a unified fighting force?

PF: Surprisingly, yes. We had thought prior to deploying and getting there that there would be a lot of infighting issues amongst the soldiers. If you think about America, back when there was segregation and such, there was probably more resistance at higher levels. But at the user level, where the people are interacting, it sort of melds together more. And we mirrored it through the companies. We wouldn't make a Sunni company or a Shi'a company, and CMATT had pretty much said that: "Keep diversity down to the platoon levels. Don't try to keep guys segregated." We didn't see a lot of that problem. You would see cliques, if you will, of guys who would habitually hang out together in the evenings. People would generally group up with their cultural structures, which is really not that out of the ordinary. There were some unique problems that arose, specifically due to culture. The one I can think of precisely was that there was a group of Kurds called the Yazidi Kurds, and the issue was that they were adverse to water. In other words - and I don't know how to say this without coming off a little strange - but their religious beliefs were that dirt was okay and that water was actually bad, to cleanse yourself with water. So there were some hygiene issues in the barracks with this group of soldiers. But it really wasn't so much based off the fact that that they were Kurdish, more the fact that they're not washing up properly and are making a mess in the latrines, and this is a problem for everyone. Within the officer staff, I felt like we had a pretty good relationship between the different the various groups, between the officers. A good working relationship.

JM: Can you talk a little bit about the context that surrounded your battalion getting sent to the Fallujah fight? What was the timeline of events and everything?

PF: Okay, so we have the leadership training. We got those guys spun up and then we basically started filling the battalion with new recruits. So what happened was that they showed up at the front gate at Kirkush from across the country, which is different than the ING [Iraqi National Guard] units at this time which had been taken from a local area. So the battalion could consist of guys from Basra in the south all the way up to Mosul in the north, and everywhere in between. So they show up. We get them integrated. We conduct our basic training, which takes approximately two months, so we're looking at May/June. And then once we finished the individual training, we had the graduation ceremony, similar to Sand Hill at Fort Benning, Georgia. They graduated and then we began working collective tasks. We started a rotational schedule where guys could go on leave and then three weeks of work, and during

those three weeks we started off with squad-level training and we really got up to platoon-level training coherently. Company-level operations weren't really what we'd consider company-level operations in the U.S. sense. We'd go out as a company and set up a company checkpoint, but really the platoons work in concert at one location. We conducted that training basically inside the wire in Kirkush: safe and benign, just training inside the wire. Getting outside into sector was a little bit of a struggle initially because the 1st ID controlled the area we were in. It was their sector; 30th ESB worked for 1st ID; they owned the sandbox outside of Kirkush proper. You can't just wander outside the gate and start doing stuff; everything has to be coordinated. We needed to coordinate with 1st ID, basically, to start doing joint missions with the U.S. forces there at Kirkush, to sort of get our feet wet and start getting the guys out on live missions. We need to get out and start doing operational missions close to base, just to get guys in the field for locking and loading – real missions, real rounds. With Bremer leaving and the CPA being stood down, MNSTC-I [Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq] is standing up, so it takes over. And at this time, General [David] Petraeus is also taking over as the trainer for Iraqi security forces. Specifically under him, our CMATT point of contact was Brigadier General [James] Schwitters. He was the guy that sort of did the Army portion of that. They basically talked to 1st ID, got the arrangements set together, and then we started doing partnership missions where we would go out with a platoon of guys from the 30th ESB – from the different infantry units that were there. That platoon would go out and we would take company-sized Iraqi units at a time. So basically, your cycle was a red, amber, green, leave. You'd go on leave, you'd come back from leave; you'd have a red week where you just kind of got back, got some individual tasks down and sort of got set; in the amber week, you do some collective training to get ready; and then in the green week, you'd go outside the wire and actually start doing some, I'll call them "baby missions." Relatively speaking, Kirkush was a somewhat quiet environment relative to Baghdad, or something to that effect. So it was a good chance to get the guys out with these platoons from 30th ESB and let them start doing real-world missions. The bulk of our missions at that time – probably at the end of July – were traffic control points up in that area, obviously looking for contraband, weapons, large sums of cash, and cordon and searches. Well, I shouldn't say cordon and searches. I guess I should say combat patrols. I don't want to use the term "presence patrol" because that's out of vogue. It's never a presence patrol; you're there for a reason. But basically we would try to get the Army into the villages around Kirkush and let them start meeting the local people. And really what we were trying to do was gather intelligence, with the intent that, hopefully, when some Iraqi faces started going into these villages, there'd start to become some more crosstalk versus when the Americans were there by themselves. "Hey, here's an Iraqi. I can trust him a little more. Let me tell you what's going on."

JM: Is that what happened? Were you able to quantify that?

PF: In the time we went operational – which we're looking at the end of July. We moved to Fallujah in late October, beginning of November, so it was really about three months. While I was present, we never really got any large payoff tips from that piece. In those three months, I can't give you anything concrete of, "Here was a high payoff; we got some feedback that turned into something." I know later, after I had left and the unit came back to Kirkush after Fallujah, there was a large training camp that was identified south of the camp about 20 kilometers, in an area that we had been working prior. I don't know if some of that led into it or not. I can't say either way. So that was really a three-month operational period from the end of July through November. During that period, all the battalions had graduated, so now you had 5th Battalion,

6th Battalion and 7th Battalion that were in an “operational status.” Ready to go outside the wire and do stuff, but not trained to the level of 1st through 4th Battalion IIF guys. So 5th Battalion had got the word, “You’re going to move back to Taji, near Baghdad, and provide base protection, basically for Taji.” They were going to take over the perimeter. More training was going to be done at Taji so they wanted to relieve the units that were there from the security mission. And 5th Battalion was going to do that: manning posts and also doing active patrolling outside the wire. And us, along with 7th Battalion, we were to remain in Kirkush and do those local patrols with the 1st ID. I think it was in October, but 7th Battalion got activated to go up to the fight in Samarra, so they cleared out of Kirkush and went up to that location. 6th Battalion remained at Kirkush. We took over the base security and still conducted local patrols right outside the wire, the traffic control points, the combat patrols in the villages. About this time, we were starting to get some good experience. Guys were getting their feet wet. During that period we had one good combat engagement. We had some guys that were doing a combat patrol in the area, stopped them, they actually got out and started firing and seized the vehicle. They killed one of the members and there were several items in the vehicle: a PKM machinegun, a couple RPGs [Rocket Propelled Grenades], stuff like that. So the guys were starting get some experience, not to the Fallujah level but starting to get some. So about that time, the word came down that Fallujah was going to be happening and that 6th Battalion and 5th Battalion out at Taji would both disengage from Kirkush and Taji, respectively, move down there and be involved in that fight.

MM: Now, who’d you get the orders from initially to send your people into this operation? Were you dealing with the Marines?

PF: All of my transactions went through the brigade advisor team, which at the time had transitioned to Lieutenant Colonel Rodney Symons. He was the 3rd Brigade advisor and the one who obviously was talking to the division advisor team. And really, at that point, the division was still in its infancy. I mean, really, the operational unit was the 3rd Brigade, so he was really dealing a lot directly with the palace, General Schwitters and CMATT. He’s the one that specifically told me: “6th Battalion and 5th Battalion are going to go down to Fallujah.” And then we worked with the 30th ESB and 1st ID to coordinate the convoy security to get us down there. The Iraqis can convoy in and of themselves but, in order to get the combat multipliers – air cover, artillery, anything like that – we need to be tied in with a lifeline to an American unit that understands we’re there and we’re out operating. So, we coordinated with 1st ID, 30th ESB, and got the convoys down and moved the battalion-minus down. I want to say it was around November 1st.

MM: Did anybody ask, “Hey, do you think these boys are ready to fight?” Were you asked any input on this or were you just ordered to –?

PF: You guys are familiar with the Army USR [Unit Status Report] where we say how ready our units are. Right about the time we graduated basic training, we had started doing like an Iraqi version of the USR, a readiness assessment. Initially, as I said, S4 was a big issue. Getting the equipment that we needed was a huge issue, so when we first graduated, most of our readiness assessments were red, basically for lacking equipment: machine guns, trucks; not having any of that equipment. I was the one responsible for sending in the 6th Battalion readiness reports, and we were in a ready status before we rolled out to do the operational stuff right around Kirkush.

Were we as ready as when we went to Fallujah? No, but we were ready. Absolutely. When we went to Fallujah, I felt like the battalion had the equipment. We'd been filled up and the men were trained properly to go and conduct company-minus-level operations. We couldn't really go in and conduct a battalion-coordinated operational attack, but as companies we'd performed at that level of operations.

MM: Could you just now explain the entire operation to us, the Fallujah piece?

PF: Sure. We had showed up at Camp Fallujah, just to the east side of Fallujah, and there was actually a staging area set up outside of the Marine camp. As an advisor, I got the impression that there was an "us" and a "them." In other words, there was the American camp and, then, outside there was a bermed area for the Iraqis, of which we were part. But they were starting to set up some very hasty living conditions for the Iraqis that were coming in. There was 5th Battalion, 6th Battalion - which was my battalion - and there was also the 1st Brigade IIF that was also showing up, so they were trying to get tentage and living spaces for all those guys. This was right around the 1st of November and we had over a week to try and basically get guys together, start doing some training there at the camp, start getting all the PCCs [Pre-Combat Checks], PCIs [Pre-Combat Inspections] done. The 5th Battalion actually worked with the Marines. I believe it was 1-3 Marines. They actually got cut and started doing rehearsals with them as far as how they were going to ride in on the LAVs [Light Armored Vehicles] coming into the city. And then the IIF was conducting its own separate rehearsals. They were over in the Jolan District, and I don't exactly understand their relationship with the Marines specifically. Well, what I was told through Colonel Symons was that 6th Battalion would be put under 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, which was the Black Jack Brigade and Colonel [Michael] Formica. I'd have to look at the orders to remember exactly whether we were attached, OPCON'd or TACON'd [i.e., placed under the operational or tactical control of].

MM: Right, I've spoken with Colonel Formica and we're setting up an interview with him, too.

PF: So we were put directly under him. We basically got our marching orders directly from the 2nd Brigade, so our tasks were given down from the brigade. I started initially plugging into the 2nd Brigade as far as getting my missions, as far as what we would start conducting. I started bringing my colonel, my Iraqi colonel, Colonel Jawad with me, so we were sort of doing the group liaison thing, getting him plugged in. Initially, prior to the assault going into the city, 6th Battalion was responsible for checkpoints along the routes. Do you have a blowup of Fallujah?

MM: We've got this one, which has the outline of the city -

PF: Yeah, those aren't going to - I didn't have time to pull it out. Once again, we were sort of off to the east.

MM: Now, I think on this map here, they do actually identify - can you see if that's Camp Fallujah or not?

PF: I'm thinking Camp Fallujah is over there. I'm thinking that's the northeast corner of the city here. Well, this isn't a showstopper. If you look at this, here we've got Fallujah proper and then to the east we have this main highway that came out -

MM: Highway 10, the one with the spiraling traffic loops -

PF: Yes, that one right there, which headed back. Then there was another highway that kind of came off up here, north of the city, came out and then they intersected.

MM: You can see these traffic circles right here.

PF: Right, that was the main entrance there. I can't remember what that Phase Line was -

MM: Phase Line Fran.

PF: But these streets here, and there was another one that came out here, and they kind of came out, looped and they crossed. Abu Ghraib Prison was over here at that one intersection, and then you sort of went off to Baghdad. Initially, our area of responsibility was between the east side of the city and Abu Ghraib and on those two main routes. I can't remember the MSR names.

MM: On this other map, they've got you located - I don't know if they've got you as the right unit here, but -

PF: That's kind of correct in relationship, but just so you don't get the misperception, 6th Battalion wasn't fighting through the eastern edge of the city. The 6th was actually out on the perimeters with the roads conducting traffic control points and also doing route security - and that was from this entire expanse from here along the western edge of the city all the way down along this road to Abu Ghraib, and then coming back up on the northern route. So really that was sort of our sector, if you will. We did the TCPs in order to interdict people that were coming into and out of the city, and additionally we did route security: making sure that once these roads had gotten closed down for the operations, that they stayed closed. The only traffic you had on those was military at the time.

MM: So Black Jack Brigade's pretty much given the mission that they're going to go into a blocking position. As the attack goes in, they're supposed to be catching any insurgents that might try to break out to the south or something. Were you guys given a totally different mission then? Were you instructed to do this blocking mission or were you to do some other sort of mission?

PF: Initially, our battalion was not given its own mission. It wasn't, "6th Battalion, Iraqi Army, you're going to go set up these checkpoints." What was happening was that 6th Battalion was working in concert with U.S. units at these checkpoints, and this was a common thing I saw as an advisor in Iraq. Understand that most of the American units at that time had been with ING, which did not have the same level of training as the Iraqi Army at that time. So there was a little bit of a reluctance to say, "Okay, Iraqi unit, you're going to go take this area of the sandbox."

JM: They weren't confident that they could carry it out.

PF: Right. So basically, we were working in concert with U.S. units. We were probably providing, at different checkpoints, maybe 50 percent, maybe greater, of the strength that was at

the checkpoints with American units there. And that necessarily wasn't a bad thing. We had our advisors spread out so, if we had to, we had links to the Black Jack Brigade, air, indirect, or more importantly MEDEVAC [Medical Evacuation] if required.

MM: Did your battalion have use of radios?

PF: Yes and no. The Iraqis actually received a Motorola vehicle radio. It kind of looked like a CB. It was about the size of one with a little hand mike on it that they mounted in the pickup trucks that you see – the white Nissans. They weren't secure, obviously, and the range was kind of limited. Off the top of my head, our battalion had about 30 or 40 of those for our vehicles, and then additionally they had the handheld Motorolas.

MM: Did *you* at least have a decent radio so you could get in touch?

PF: Later, much later. But before we went operational, we had gotten two up-armored Humvees along with dual radio, a VRC-92 comm suite, one .50 caliber machinegun with spring mount, and one M-60 machine gun. The 10-man team had those two trucks. And, honestly, that was plenty, because to try and man them with three guys each, that's six guys out of a 10-man team. By that time, I had lost – not lost due to injury or anything; there were some different issues that had come up – but I was down to a seven-man team at that point, so we were pretty full just to man the Humvees and get out there. So yes, the Iraqis were initially pretty austere on communication assets, and I don't know what the situation is over there now.

JM: By the time Fallujah kicked off, what kind of vehicles were the Iraqis in? Were they all still in the pickup trucks?

PF: Yes.

JM: So they didn't have military vehicles?

PF: No, they did not. A commander would be in a pickup truck. Additional, we had the PKM machineguns, which required some fabrication, and for this, 30th ESB – which was on Kirkush with us – was a huge help. At the time, there was no formalized machinegun mount on those trucks. So if a guy in the truck bed took a PKM machinegun and laid it over the cab, it would slide around while you were driving. So the 30th welders, out of the goodness of their hearts and through some scrounging, they built us some post mounts in the back of the trucks, so what we had were, in essence, gun trucks, technicals, that we built. But there was no armor protection at all, so that Iraqi standing up in the back of that truck on the machinegun was fully exposed. The guys that actually came to Fallujah, they were some great soldiers – the Iraqis, I'm speaking of. Some of the things they did, we would never expect our soldiers to do. It really showed a lot of intestinal fortitude, I thought. But yeah, they were still using those trucks and, in addition, they were using what we called the "bongo trucks," which are kind of like five-tons but a civilian version. They were tan Hyundai trucks with a tarp covering the back. We tried to give them a little more protection, so we made them make sandbag walls along the two edges of the trucks. Basically, if you crouched down in the truck, you could put your rifle over the sandbag. There was a tarp on the side and it would give you some protection and a firing port to shoot out as you drove. So getting back to it, yes, most of the missions initially were joint missions

with U.S. forces. All those TCP missions along the route were joint, and it was usually based on what unit was close by. For example, at Abu Ghraib, we had a checkpoint right outside and that was manned by an MP unit, I believe, that was inside the prison there. But then the Iraqi forces were linked in, along with their advisors. One thing that helped in one way but complicated things in another way was, at this time, we were in country for about nine months and they were trying to switch out advisor teams. So there was a new advisor team that had showed up just prior to deploying to Fallujah. So we were able to use them as an extra set of hands for getting out with the Iraqis and manning the Humvees. But the flip side was that they were new in country, so we were reluctant to say, "Go out there; you're alone in the wilderness by yourself." We wanted to get them spun up and make sure they were ready before we disengaged from them. So it was kind of a blessing that we had extra hands, but then additionally it was probably not a great time to do a handover - being actually involved in major operations. During those TCP routes, I felt that Black Jack started to get more confidence in the abilities. They hadn't seen a lot of the problems that they'd seen with the Iraqi National Guard fellows assigned to 1st CAV. At this point now, the operations in the city are going on. The Marines are actually fighting through and 5th Battalion is located with the Marines going down through the center. I don't want to speak for Mike Zacchea, but I want to say that they were kind of a follow mission, given specific objectives, i.e. mosques or things that were really culturally sensitive.

MM: Is he up at the school right now?

PF: No, he's a Marine.

MM: Oh, okay.

PF: He's a Marine and I don't know if he stayed on. I know he was a Reserve Marine. I don't know if he's back in the civilian sector or not. But anyway, back to Fallujah. Once we started to get some confidence and some rapport built with Black Jack, that was when they started to give 6th Battalion some cordon and search missions, as battalion-level proper missions. So in other words, "6th Battalion, go and conduct a cordon and search of this village." I can't remember the name, but it was basically up in the north, northeast of the city. We went on a few cordon and search missions looking for any Iraqi foreign fighters that had fled the city. A major find that sticks out in my mind was a police station that had basically been abandoned by the police. The Iraqis came in and made contact with some people that were living in the police station. Talked to them and, come to find out, the police had left and the people living there had secured the police station. Well, they would up finding the guy who knew the guy who had the friend who had the key to the storage room. They opened it up and there were several hundred Iraqi police vests with the plates in them and 50-plus AK-47s. The vests were one of the big things, because if those had gotten into the hands of the insurgents, they could've really helped their fight. There were also some pistols and some other equipment in the storage room, so that was probably one of the biggest seizures, but it wasn't a seizure under contact per se. Once again, it was the Iraqis working with the locals. They told them about it and said, "Hey, we want to get this stuff turned in, we're tired of watching it, we're scared some bad guys are going to get a hold of it." That was a small example of the success with the Iraqis working with the Iraqi population. It's one of those things that we, as Americans, don't get the connection if we go in there. So Black Jack started trusting us to do those missions. We did the cordon and searches up

there north and northeast of the city. About that time is when I was transitioning out also. One of the units we did that in concert with, too, was the 1-5 CAV out of Black Jack Brigade. I think it was Lieutenant Colonel Myles Miyamasu. Once that rapport was built, we actually wound up going into the town itself and doing the search. 1-5 CAV actually acted as our outer cordon, so they were in essence a shaping operation for us, the decisive operation inside the city. There was sort of this transition from, initially, "What are we capable of handling?" to when we were doing the actual mission with the American battalion who was shaping operations. I felt like we really built a great rapport with those guys, with the 2nd Brigade, Black Jack. I felt like that was a good use towards the end. My preference would have probably been to be tied in with the Marines, with the actual city portion of it, but I understand the logic. And the logic was: we wanted to get the Iraqis tied in with every aspect of the operation. Black Jack Brigade, which was a shaping aspect of the operation - while not as glamorous as the Marine piece - was an important part of the overall operation. It did get Iraqis spread out, with that shaping operation with Black Jack, plus Iraqis actually doing the missions in the city itself. I understand why we did that. And also, the natural fallout was 6th Battalion had Army advisors and 5th Battalion had Marine advisors. Let's put Marines with Marines and Army with Army.

MM: Did they pull your battalion out about the 20th of November? Were you there for two weeks?

PF: I actually left Fallujah - I want to say it was around the 20th, somewhere around there.

MM: Because that's when all the Army units retrograde out of there.

PF: Breaking contact out of there, I had to get all these different flights and everything, so I lose track of time at that point. Around the 20th when I pulled out, I handed the keys over to Major John Curwin. He took over as the senior advisor for 6th Battalion and that was about the time we were doing the cordon and searches of the villages northeast of Fallujah proper. My understanding was that the battalions hung around for a little while. From talking to John, I don't think they came back up to Kirkush until sometime in December. Don't take this as gospel, but I believe they stayed in the city as a police force until MNSTC-I could get the forces together to put in an Iraqi police force proper and then get the Army units disengaged. And then once 6th Battalion got disengaged, John told me they went back to Kirkush and stayed up there as their center of operations. They got renamed 2nd Battalion at some point; and they also got re-designated from Iraq Army Force to Iraqi Intervention Force at some point during that Fallujah operation. I'm a little vague as to what happened after that period.

MM: No, that's fine. I can tell you right now, a lot of the stuff that you've given us, I'm certain they're going to use in the *On Point II* book that they're working on right now. I was just discussing this with some of them the other day, so I'm sure they'd love to see this.

PF: I feel like it was kind of nebulous, some of the stuff I told you. I don't know if it was concrete enough.

MM: It was; it was great. Plus, what you have pertains a lot more to John's project, but now this is an extra added piece for me with the Black Jack Brigade, the shaping operation and who was out there.

PF: And it will be interesting. You said you were going to be talking to Colonel Formica?

MM: Right.

PF: It'll be interesting to hear his views. Once again, the brigade was very receptive to us coming in. Understanding that, coming in as an Iraqi Army battalion, we bring a good cultural aspect. But as far as firepower and combat power, it's pretty limited. Keeping that in mind and understanding he's responsible for the overall operation. Although initially we were doing those joint operations, I feel that once we sort of proved ourselves and they got a gauge on where we were at, they literally put us into some good missions. Those cordon and searches were good battalion-level missions, and they were actually pretty complex. It was really sitting down with the Iraqi battalion commander and making sure that he was wired on what was going to occur. You know, when I initially went over there, when I would talk to the battalion commander about something the battalion was doing, my thought was: this is the way, my way, that we should fix the problem. It was the American way and, thus, it had to be the right way and this is the way we should approach the problem. Well, after having our 10 guys living right in the middle of several hundred Iraqis for a while, you start to realize that, because of cultural differences, something that they do, which might seem silly to an American, is actually pretty effective. And by the end of my tour, I would very often default to Colonel Jawad: "Sir, how do *you* think we should solve this problem?" He would tell me something and, regardless of my personal American-skewed view on it, a lot of times, if we let his advice play out, it would work a lot better than trying to put the American answer on top of it. So the cultural aspect can't be understated. It can't be overemphasized as an advisor going in to work with a foreign army. You have to take into account that they understand their people better than we can. It's the same as if an Iraqi came here to New York City and you asked him to figure out who the criminals are. We could just look and say, "Well, that guy looks a little shady." It's the same thing, so the cultural aspect is huge.

JM: Could you give us any specific examples, instances when the American way may not have been the best way?

PF: That's a good question. I've tried to think of some of these, but it's been a while. We've talked about the importance of leave and pay, and I think that's probably one of the key examples that I finally came around to. Once again, the American perspective is: "I don't see what the complaint is. You're going to get paid. We're not going to cheat you out of your money. You'll get your leave when you get your leave, end of story." Well, the Iraqi colonel approached it like, "Who *really* has to get back to see their family and give them money?" And why do they get what, in America, we would call special privilege. I would want to say: "This is the standard and we're not going to deviate from that. No one's going to get a special exemption for that. Why are you above this guy?" But I think he understood better people's personal situation and he could take into account things in the family that I couldn't: the size of the village they were from, whether there was someone else. The Iraqis had a fantastic network - and I don't know how they could do this. But if a relative died or was sick hundreds of miles away, the soldier would know that by the friend of a friend who brought a note to a friend and it would end up at the front gate. I don't know how they did it, but it was extremely effective. There was this sub-network of information and culture, and he understood that better than me. He could say, "This guy needs to go home. He will come back. He's not a bad soldier. He just

needs to do this, he'll return, and then he'll be better for doing this than if we force him to stay here for another two weeks." That's probably a good example of that.

JM: You were doing a lot of coaching, mentoring and advising. Is there anything that *you* learned? Maybe not in a tactical sense, but is there anything you learned that maybe contributed to your professional development in a positive way?

PF: The number one aspect that I learned was that cultural awareness piece. The American attitude is sometimes very arrogant and we are very quick to assume that we, as Americans, have the only right answer. Perception is reality a lot of the times to someone from a different culture or a different country. Even if I say two plus two is four, if he doesn't believe that, that may never be the right answer to him. So I think that's the number one lesson that I learned. Other things that stood out - in CGSC we use the term FID [Foreign Internal Defense] missions: training foreign armies. This goes back to the cultural understanding but, in my mind, I imagine what a battalion would look like if Pete Fedak was the battalion commander or a company if Pete Fedak was the company commander: what I'd expect, how things are laid out, how it should be arranged, etc. Well, due to cultural differences, in the Iraqi Army - to use a single battalion as an example - that unit could never look *exactly* like I imagined it. Trying to get it to that level, to that fit - once again, when I first got there, that was my vision. "This is what an American battalion looks like, so this is what an Iraqi battalion has to look like." And it's never going to quite get there. It's never going to look identical. And I guess what I learned here is that that's okay. It's okay for it not to look identical to an American battalion. You can still be effective without fitting the mental model of what I think is an effective unit, what I think is the only way right can work. Things that we wouldn't think are important might be very important to an Iraqi unit. The unit patches. Okay, what does it matter if you have a patch? Does that really make a difference? You can still go out to fight. It's not going to be a showstopper. But for the Iraqis, that was a huge cohesion issue. And when they got to put on those patches, when we got our 6th Battalion patches, that was tremendous. Little things that I might think are silly, and it kind of goes back to the cultural understanding. "I think it's silly so it's got to be silly." Well, it's not silly if they don't think it's silly.

JM: Do you have anything more, Matt?

MM: No, I'm good.

JM: Just one more from me, then, if you don't mind. You mentioned you kind of had this hasty advisor course - if you want to call it that - or some kind of shotgun approach to how you're going to advise. If you were design maybe a program of instruction or give advice to someone tasked with a similar mission, what would you include in that? How would that be structured? What are some of the main points you'd want to get across?

PF: That's a great question, too. When I say "course," it's a very strong word to use based on what we had happen at Taji - and I can understand, it was the early stages. When I showed up, literally people did not know what an advisor meant, what an AST meant. This wasn't even a term in vogue, per se. I guess now it's gotten quite a bit more popular, but when we went over, no one knew what that was. So I think it's hard to just come off right now with a laundry list of things that need to occur for an advisory training program. But I do think there needs to be

some sort of a program prior to leaving the States, Germany, wherever you're stationed, just to get you spun up initially, mentally, what you're going to be doing there. I want to say some of that's occurring now. A friend of mine, a sergeant first class that was stationed with me at Hohenfels, he's going over as an advisor and he told me he had just gone to Fort Hood for some sort of a predeployment program. Now, I don't know if that's just a basic program on qualifying with your rifle, getting some medical training, or if they focus on the advisor aspects. I also understand now from the speech that General Petraeus gave us a few months ago, that there's what they call the Phoenix Academy in Taji, which is kind of a no-bullshit, "Here's what's going on as an advisor in Iraq." So I think prior to leaving home station or your duty station, you need to get a dose of that; and then when you get in country, you need to get the, "No shit, here's the way things are occurring," dose of it. Going back to what I said originally, it would be great if they could have some of the guys who've done this give some words of wisdom. Not so much for the war stories, but to emphasize things like the cultural piece, understanding that the American way isn't the only way, and don't expect things to look exactly like you imagine it. And maybe you don't quite buy it until you get there and live it, but if someone had shook me and said that earlier, maybe it wouldn't have taken me so long to hit the switch and say, "You know, it's okay if it's not an American model unit. It's okay to live with some imperfections if it gets the job done." This is getting off on a tangent a little bit, but General Petraeus made the comment about the readiness status of the Iraqi forces. There was something in the news about the categories and that they wanted to get this category unit to operate at 100 percent independent, by themselves. I don't want to put words in his mouth, but he mentioned that it was kind of a reality check to say that category one should actually be a unit requiring minimal help to get combat multipliers that they're not capable of themselves, such as close air support or MEDEVAC, and I totally agree. If I can put 10 guys with a 1,000-man battalion and give them a SINCGARS [Single Channel Ground to Air Radio System] link to close air support, artillery, MEDEVAC and American combat multipliers, that gives me 1,000 rifles on the ground and only costing me 10 U.S. soldiers. That's a lot of bang for the buck and I think that's a good thing. If we realize this expectation and say, "Hey, look, it's unrealistic to think I can have 1,000 guys out there and an Iraqi is going to talk to a pilot on the radio and call in a CAS strike." I mean, that's hard for a U.S. soldier to do, let alone in a second language. So, the realistic expectations. I don't know if they're actually doing basic training like we did. I think that might be a thing of the past since the units are already operational. But if guys are still going over and standing up units from scratch, I think in these prep courses - either stateside or Phoenix Academy - they should give them a very detailed, "Here's what we expect you'll accomplish" with a program of instruction. And even if they just reference what the task and mission standards are - I mean, that's all we did. We basically went through how you qualify on a range. We were given some loose guidance as far as how many hits with an AK on a standard-sized target at 25 meters. That, I think, was occurring while I left, actually, because I knew there was a basic training method of instruction that came out to emphasize that. Those aren't really great answers right now. I think that'll require some thought, to really think what items we need to put in our program before a guy gets over there. But I think we definitely need something. I think it's the wrong answer to just say, "Go over and figure it out on the fly." Let's give him some grounding, and the main focus should be cultural: not the American looking glass but the Iraqi looking glass.

JM: Okay, great. Well, thanks very much for your time, Pete.

PF: I feel like I didn't spend enough - I know you were really interested in Fallujah.

MM: I got what I needed, but I'll tell you, there's a bigger picture here. Before you leave, I'll introduce you to the guy who's writing the history of everything that you just talked about: the training of indigenous forces.

PF: Okay, like I said, our story is not too glamorous regarding Fallujah.

MM: It's another piece. It's important.

PF: Does that give you a feel for what we did in Fallujah?

MM: Oh, absolutely. But I must confess, I tried to put all of this together while we were waiting for you to come over here, and I said, "Wait a minute. This says 6th Battalion and this says 2nd Battalion. Somebody's wrong here."

PF: I hadn't looked at that book, the Bing West book. I've been wanting to read it and I pulled it the other day at the library. For some reason, I was thumbing through, saw that, and I was like, "I wish I had seen that before he came. I would have stopped in and just -" He had a lot of information. I'm not dinging him on it, but just to set it straight so, if he does a reprint or something, he can modify it. Yeah, 2-2 was definitely tied in with the Marines.

MM: Even the Marine general in this article I have here, he even gets 2-2 wrong. He has 2-2 as part of 4th Infantry Division.

JM: We'll just stop the tape here. Thanks again.



END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Jennifer Vedder, 18 February 2006