NATO Operations and National Politics
Interviewer

Today is November the 18th, Friday, November 18th.Â Weâ€™re at West Point, and this is the second installment of our interview with General Lynchâ€”of what we hope will be many installmentsâ€” weâ€™ll put it that way.Â So General Lynch, letâ€™s pick up with the story of your participation in the War in Iraq.

Rick Lynch

Okay.

Interviewer

Why donâ€™t you begin with the invasion in 2003, and where you were and what role you played, and letâ€™s just take it from there.

Rick Lynch

Sure.Â Â During the invasion, I was the Chief of Staff of the Kosovo force in Kosovoâ€”600-man staff, twenty-nine different nations, a good portion of which were Americansâ€”American soldiers.Â Â So we were there during the conduct of the invasion and watched that with great interest.Â Â It was interesting to me how the focusâ€”Â

Interviewer

This is still 3rdÂ ID, thenâ€”is that right?Â Â What was yourâ€”Â

Rick Lynch

No, I wasâ€”I had been the Assistant Division Commander of the 4th Division.

Interviewer

4thÂ Division.

Rick Lynch

Got moved to Kosovo for a yearâ€”detailed to Kosovo to that NATO force, KFOR, in Kosovo.Â Â It was funny to me, it was interesting to watch how our nationâ€™s focus shifted, because we were focused on the Balkansâ€”Bosnia and Kosovoâ€”and thatâ€™s why I was sent to Kosovo to be the Chief of Staff of that force to keep the Kosovo Albanians and the Kosovo Serbs from killing each other.Â Â And I was two-thirds of the way through that deployment during the invasion of Iraq.Â Â So we watched that with great interest.

Rick Lynch

And then, after that position in Kosovo, I was sent to be the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations for Joint Force Command Naples, which is another command in Naples, Italy.Â Â And from that position, we worked to get NATO into Iraq.Â Â That was my first exposure into the theater.Â Â We developed this thing called the NATO Training Mission-Iraq, which was intended to getÂ members of the NATO nations to send trainers into Iraq to facilitate the training of the Iraqi security forces.Â Â So when Admiral Mullen, whoâ€™s now the Chairman [of the Joint Chiefs of Staff], was the Commander of Joint Force

Command Naples, I was his Operations Officer, and we took repetitive trips into Iraq, trying to establish a NATO presence as part of the mission.

Interviewer

And so what month we talking about here when you say this?Â Â The invasion happens in 2003.

Rick Lynch

Yeah.

Interviewer

Was it the first year, or theâ€”Â

Rick Lynch

I went toâ€”I was in Kosovo till July of 2003, and then I went straight to Naples, Italy.Â Â And over the course of the first year is when we started forming this NATO Training Missionâ€”so it was late 2004-early 2005 when I was working from Naples to establish a NATO presence in Iraq.

Interviewer

I see.Â Â Now what does that meanâ€”when you say, â€œworking from Naples to establish a NATO presence in Iraq?â€

Rick Lynch

Yeah.

Interviewer

How does that happen?

Rick Lynch

Yeah.Â Â If you look closely at theÂ NATO organizational structure, they have operational commandsâ€”one in Brunssum for the northern portion of Europe, and one in Naples for the southern portion of Europe.Â Â So as the Operations Officer in Naples, I was responsible for the NATO missions in Bosnia and Kosovo and Macedonia.Â

Rick Lynch

There was indeed a move on the part of our government to get a NATO presence in Iraq so it wasnâ€™t just a US issue, it was a multi-national issue.Â Â And as you can imagine, there was a lot of resistance with some of the NATO nations to do that.Â Â But what we were trying to do is, even if it was going to be a small NATO presence, at least the Commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq, who was General Casey at the time, could say, â€œItâ€™s not just a U.S., itâ€™s a coalition, and oh, by the way, part of this coalition are members of the NATO nations.â€Â Â So Admiral Mullen and I spent a lot of time working with the NATO leadership to convince member nations of NATO to send small groups of people into IraqÂ to help train Iraqi security forces.

Interviewer

Now, from the way you just described it, it sounds more like itâ€™s a kind of political or a public posture more than it is operationalâ€” that thereâ€™s a need to sort of communicate to the world that this is not just the U.S.â€™s venture, that NATO, with its seal of approval, is there, too.

Rick Lynch

No, thatâ€™s exactly right.Â Â I mean, when you added it all up, the members of the NATO Training Mission were about 100 people, total.Â Â But that represented about seven of the NATO nations, so we, as a nation, could say, â€œHey, weâ€™re in Iraq not just unilaterally, but part of a coalition, and NATOâ€™s here as well.â€

Interviewer

But that would seem to me as though thatâ€™s a political decision for the individual member countries.

Rick Lynch

Thatâ€™s exactly right.

Rick Lynch

And so thatâ€™s what you were working on.

Rick Lynch

Yeah, thatâ€™s why manyâ€”over two-thirdsâ€”of the member countries refused to send anybody into Iraq, based on opposition of the operations in Iraq.Â Â And weâ€™re doing the same thing now in Afghanistanâ€”there is a NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan thatâ€™s following a similar construct.

Interviewer

I wouldâ€™ve thought that that task wouldâ€™ve been assigned to theÂ diplomatic corpsâ€”to try to convince the various national structures to join into the War in Iraq.

Rick Lynch

Yeah, and indeed it was.Â Â Remember, you have military representations to the NATO committee, and you have political representations to the NATO committee.Â Â So the U.S. permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council was actively pursuing with his counterpartsâ€”Â

Interviewer

Who was that at the time?Â Â Thatâ€™s okay if you donâ€™t remember.

Rick Lynch

The name escapes me. But there was a military piece and there was a political piece, as there is in everything weâ€™re doing these days, and that was part of it.

Rick Lynch

But as the military piece, what is your role in forcing that issue?

Rick Lynch

Yeah.Â Â We formed a command structure for the NATO Training Mission in Iraq.Â Â We worked with the Dutch government to get a Major General to command the NATO Training Mission in Iraq.Â Â And then, from a military perspective, we worked with the military reps of NATO to get them to donate soldiers to the causeâ€”thatâ€™s what we did.Â Â So I found myselfÂ spending a lot of time, with Admiral Mullen, trying to convince the military leadership to contribute, but they could only contribute if their political leadership said itâ€™s okay.Â Â So it was indeed a complicated situation.

Interviewer

Give me a sense of how those conversations went.Â Â So you wereâ€”were there some countries that were more accommodating than others?

Rick Lynch

Oh, by all means.Â Â I mean, there wereâ€”

Interviewer

Who were they?

Rick Lynch

We could always rely on the British government to contribute.Â Â We could rely on the Dutch government to contribute.Â Â We knew there was going to be no French contribution.Â Â We knew that the Germans, given any particular day, may or may not contribute, depending on what was going on.Â Â We ended up having eight or nine nations making small contributions, and now I donâ€™t remember precisely who they were.

Interviewer

Right.Â Â And were you instrumental with your counterparts in those various countriesÂ where it was still a question of actually affecting the decision?

Rick Lynch

Oh, by all means.

Interviewer

So the French general that is in charge of NATO forces for Franceâ€”you would put pressure on him to try to see if he could convince the political leadership there to join?

Rick Lynch

Oh, exactly.Â Â It was a continual conversation.Â Â And remember, a lot of these relationshipsâ€”for example, when I was in Kosovo, my bossâ€”I was the Chief of Staffâ€”the boss was a French three-star named Marcel Valentin.Â Â And he was a magnificent operational-level commander.Â Â So we had personal and professional connections that we played to.Â Â Having said that, the trump card was always the political dimensionâ€”whether or not their nationâ€™s leadership wanted to be involved in operations in Iraq.

Rick Lynch

And in terms of that conversation, is it that your counterparts are asking what functional role their forces could contribute to the War in Iraq, or is it convincingÂ them of the rightness of the American invasion?

Rick Lynch

What I found over my course of my career, specifically as a general officer, most of it is experiential learning.Â Â So I had three years total with NATO, so I learned to realize that within NATO, it was really a function of national caveatsâ€”what would the nation do or not do on any given situation?Â Â So, for example, when we had a major uprising in Kosovo, many of the member nations there, who professed to be part of an offensive posture, chose not to participate, with a national caveat.Â Â

Rick Lynch

So what we had to do with the military leadership is be conscious of those national caveats and continue to work to get the member nations to contribute, even if it was with a caveatâ€”â€œOkay, weâ€™ll go and do this, but we wonâ€™t do that.â€Â Â And then, at leastâ€”as you mentionedâ€”at least you could say, â€œLook, this nation is in Iraq,â€ regardless of the degree of contribution.Â Â It was indeedâ€”from an experiential learning caseâ€”it was indeed important for me to understand how to structure and execute multi-national operationsâ€”and that was a piece of it.

Interviewer

It strikes me that alsoâ€”itâ€™s something that cadets can learn from this.Â Â The skill of persuasion is criticalâ€”and not one that you would necessarily think comes into play when youâ€™re training here to join the U.S. Army.

Rick Lynch

I mean, a book that I require all my subordinates to read as a result of that experience isÂ Getting to Yes:Â Â The Art of Building a Consensus.

Interviewer

That Harvard professor, right?Â Â That Harvard Law professor, I think.

Rick Lynch

Exactly.Â Â I mean, you canâ€™t walk into a conversation and say, â€œItâ€™s my way or itâ€™s the highway.â€Â Â It doesnâ€™t work that way.Â Â What you have to do is reach a consensus, and being a general officer, candidly, is the art of compromise.Â Â But youâ€™ve got to have red linesâ€”you say, â€œI wonâ€™t go past this, but Iâ€™ll negotiate up to that red line.â€

Interviewer

Which is counter to what,Â instinctively, most young soldiers must think a general officer really is.Â Â They may think he can make pronouncements and theyâ€™re all realized within minutes.Â Â But instead, itâ€™s likeâ€”it has its political dimension, thatâ€”political with a small p.

Rick Lynch

People have to realize the power of the phrase, â€œsoldier-statesman,â€ because thatâ€™s what you are.Â Â And candidly, youâ€™re that way as a lieutenant.Â Â These young cadets, as they graduate, theyâ€™re going to be placed on a battlefield where thereâ€™s a significant coalition presence, and thereâ€™s going to be a requirement for compromise.Â Â Itâ€™s not always going to be their way.Â

Interviewer

Alright, so take me further now.Â Â Youâ€™re successful in thisâ€”even though youâ€™re only getting a handful of soldiers in Iraq.

Rick Lynch

Yeah, we made progressâ€”not nearly at the pace that weâ€™d like to have madeâ€”and I worked that in Naples for a couple years.

U.S. Occupation and Sectarian Rivalries in Iraq, 2005-2006
Rick Lynch

And then in May of 2005, I got orders to deploy to Iraq to be part ofÂ General Caseyâ€™s staff.Â Casey was the Commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq.Â I went into Iraq to be the Deputy Chief of Staff for political, military, and economic affairs.Â My office was in the U.S. Embassy, the U.S. Ambassador was Ambassador Khalilzad, and I spent a lot of time working with the country team to pursue interagency solution to the problems in Iraq. Â

Rick Lynch

And after two months of doing that, General Casey called me into his office and said, â€œIn addition to those duties, youâ€™re now the Spokesman for the Forceâ€â€”because we had an Army mission, and we needed to have an Army face to the mission.Â Â Prior to that, the spokesman was an Air Force Brigadier General.Â Â We took the organization that I led, called Political, Military, and Economic Affairs, converted it to Strategic Effects, and a piece of that was Strategic Communication, and a portion of that was my role as the Spokesman for the Force.Â Â So for a ten-month period of time in Iraq, in addition to working with theÂ U.S. Ambassador and the U.S. country team, I was the guy dealing with the media to tell the story of operations in Iraqâ€”and this was during a very difficult time, 2005-2006.

Interviewer

Thatâ€™s what I want you to do nextâ€”tell me where we were in the war when you arrived, then?Â Â What stage was it inâ€”what stage the insurgency was in?

Rick Lynch

Well, it was in a stage of escalation.Â Â This was in the spring of 2005 when I arrived.Â Â We were doing major combat operations across Iraq.Â Â We saw some light at the end of the tunnel.Â Â We thought that significant progress was being made, and as a result of that, we could draw down the forces in Iraq.Â Â And we had completed a plan for General Casey that would allow us to go from the 20-brigade set, which is what we were working with, to a 10-brigade set by the end of 2006.Â Â That was the plan.Â Â

Rick Lynch

One day Iâ€™m sitting next to General Casey in one of our post-battle update assessment

briefings.A A HeA gets handed a three-by-five card by a member of the staff and was told that the Golden Mosque had just been destroyed.Â Â The Golden Mosque was, of all the shrines in Iraq, the most sacred of the Shia shrines, and that point in time inflamed all of Iraq.Â Â And we had thought we were going to be the 10 brigades by 2006, at the end of 2006â€”and as you know, it was into this year before we started actually drawing down forces to the level weâ€™re at now.

Interviewer

This year being 2010.

Rick Lynch
1.
Interviewer

Golden Mosque destroyed by whom?

Rick Lynch

Yeah.

Interviewer

Sunnis, I assume.

Rick Lynch

Well, maybe.Â Â See, people want to jump to conclusions when it comes to Iraq, and you canâ€™t do that.Â Â And it was funny, â€™cause when I went to the [Army] War College in 1995, General Chilcoat was the Commandant of the War College, and he taught us to be thinking through things in an era of VUCA, V-U-C-Aâ€”volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.Â Â This was 1995, and there was nothing VUCA then compared to what we were dealing with in Iraq in the times I was thereâ€”this being 2005-2006.Â Â

Rick Lynch

So when people say, â€œWell, it was clearly a Sunni extremist that blew that up,â€ I think thatâ€™s naive.Â Â You donâ€™t know.Â Â When you deal in Iraq, youâ€™re dealing with three groups of people, all of which you could label as bad people.Â Â Youâ€™re dealing with extremists and terrorists and criminals.Â Â The terrorists are doing things, in my mind, for purely philosophical reasons, the extremists are doing things for political reasons, and the criminals are doing things for personal gain.Â Â So whenever something bad happened, you always had to ask yourself, which of those three groups did that?
Â Â Which of those three groups did that?Â Â

Rick Lynch

So it would appear on the surface that Sunni extremists blew up the Golden Mosque.Â Â As you study it,Â there had to be a period of time where the Golden Mosque was rigged for demolition, because it all fell downâ€”it collapsed.Â Â So it wasnâ€™t like somebody just drove a truck bomb up and blew it upâ€”it had to be probably weeksâ€™ worth of detailed fabrication of explosives to drop that Golden Mosque on command.Â Â The Shias controlled the mosque, so somehow there had to be access to whoever blew it up to set those demolition charges.Â Â

Rick Lynch

So even today, I donâ€™t think anybody can say with certainty who blew up the Golden Mosque, but the effect was pronounced.Â Â And it causedâ€”it inflamed the sectarian violence between the Shias and the Sunnis that lasted for the next five years.

Interviewer

Tell me what you witnessedâ€”how would you characterize this tension between the Sunnis and the Shia?Â Â And as a bystanding forceâ€”nonetheless,Â a stakeholder and a player in thisâ€” how the U.S. forces reacted and how they were seen.

Rick Lynch

Yeah.Â Â Years, decades, centuries of hatred between the Sunni population and the Shia populationâ€”and, in recent history, under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, the Shias were intimidated, massacred, stopped from all growth.Â Â So thatâ€”Â

Interviewer

So letâ€™s make this, parentheticallyâ€”Saddam, of course, was a Sunniâ€”or a secularist, really, in many ways, the Baathist regime being not exactly a friend to the Sunnis either.Â Â But that the Sunnis were really in control as an ethnic force.

Rick Lynch

Yeah, and the Shias were dominatedâ€”during the period of time that Saddam was in charge, the Shias were dominated, the Sunnis were in charge.

Rick Lynch

I hearken back to my time in Kosovo.Â Â What we were trying to do is get the K Albanians to work friendly with the K Serbians.Â Â And from a naive perspective, youâ€™d say, â€œHey, if you guys would just work together, we could make this place flourish.â€Â Â One day, one of the leaders of the Kosovar Albanians came to me, saying, â€œGeneral, you donâ€™t understand.â€Â Â I said, â€œWhat donâ€™t I understand? â€Â Â He says, â€œThe K Serbs killed three of my brothers and ten of my cousins, and if you think Iâ€™m going to forgive them any time soon, youâ€™re mistaken.â€ Â

Rick Lynch

So you have that point of friction in places like Kosovo, and itâ€™s more pronounced in places like Iraq.Â Â So there was indeed a problem between the Shia sects and the Sunni sects that was based on years of friction and development of hatred.

Interviewer

How hard is it for an Americanâ€”and particularly for young Americans, soldiersÂ working in a place like Iraq or a place like Kosovoâ€”to understand this kind of ethnic identification? Â Â Itâ€™s foreign to us, right?Â

Rick Lynch

Yeah.

Interviewer

I mean, we have racial and ethnic identification here, but nothing compared to what we see

in these parts of the world.

Rick Lynch

Yeah.Â Â I mean if you donâ€™t become a student of culture before you deployâ€”regardless whether youâ€™re deploying as a lieutenant or a lieutenant generalâ€”youâ€™re going in hampered in the performance of your duties. Â

Rick Lynch

If you study the people of Iraq, their identity goes like thisâ€”they first identify themselves with their family, then they identify themselves with their tribe, then they identify themselves with their sect, and then they identify themselves as an Iraqi.Â Â See, we, as Americans, weâ€™ll identify ourselves, when asked, as an American.Â Â Thatâ€™s our focus.Â Â Thatâ€™s not the way it is in places like Kosovo or Iraq.Â Â So you really had to study the influence of the tribes,Â because a lot of the activity was generated by the tribal elders directing activity.

Interviewer

And these tribes have history that itâ€™s very hard for a foreigner to understand immediately, right?Â Â When you talk about some of these resentments, they can go back generations.

Rick Lynch

Yeah, you had to immerse yourselfâ€”yeah, generations is the right answerâ€”you had to immerse yourself with the culture, and the way you did that, is spend a lot of time with the Iraqi people and get them to explain to you what their affinities are.Â Â Whatâ€™s causing them to do whatever theyâ€™re doing?Â Â I mean, itâ€™s naive just to go in and say, â€œOkay, we can solve these problemsâ€â€”without understanding the complexity behind the problems.

Interviewer

How are we viewed by this kind of cultureâ€”arriving in there as naÃ¯ve as we may be about these cultural echoes and resonances?Â Â How are we seen locally?

Rick Lynch

Yeah.Â Â We are viewedâ€”we were viewed then and weâ€™re viewed nowâ€”as occupiers.Â Â As occupiers.Â Â I mean, we just got to think from our perspective.Â Â If another nation were to be running the streets of America, regardless of what their purpose was, weâ€™d be claiming that they were occupiers.Â Â So thatâ€™s in the mind of the Iraqi people, both Sunni and Shia alike, and people have to acknowledge that thatâ€™s there.Â Â

Rick Lynch

Having said that, during my tenure in Iraq on General Caseyâ€™s staff, I had the opportunity to deal with many of the Sunni extremists.Â Â Itâ€™s about the art of compromise.Â Â The solution might not be â€œkill them all.â€Â Â And maybe in the course of negotiations, you can talk to them and see whatâ€™s causing the trouble, and resolve the problem without resorting to gunfireâ€”maybe.Â Â So one of my opportunities was to negotiate with the Sunni extremists from Iraq.Â Â They would come into Baghdad, and I had the opportunity to talk to them and say, â€œOkay, what can we do here?â€

Interviewer

Sitting across the table.

Interviewer

Sitting across the table.

Interviewer

Voice to voice.

Rick Lynch

Voice to voice.

Interviewer

Tell me about one of those encounters.

Rick Lynch

It was 15 or 16 leadersâ€”as much as they can be called leadersâ€”of Sunni extremists.Â Â These were factionsâ€”if you were to try to find whoâ€™s in charge of the Sunni extremists in Iraq, you couldnâ€™t find him, â€™cause thereâ€™s not one.Â Â Thereâ€™s factions.Â Â So on any given eventâ€”and I did this four or five timesâ€”leaders of factions would be brought down to Baghdad so I could talk to them.

Interviewer

How did that happen, though?Â Â What prompted them to be willing to come sit with you?

Rick Lynch

The leadership of Iraqâ€”the folks that were currently in power and had been in power, like the Prime Ministerâ€”was able to reach out to the folks, regardless of whether they were Sunnis or Shias, and say, â€œThe Americans are willing to talkâ€”just to talk, to see what the opportunities are.â€Â Â And I was the guy doing that.Â Â I had a chance to talk to them.Â Â So it was me and a member of the State Department.Â Â Normally we did it atÂ Allawiâ€™s house, Prime Minister Allawiâ€™s house, there in Baghdad, and these folks would come in from all around Iraq, and weâ€™d have a conversation about what can we do to end the hostilities.Â Â

Rick Lynch

I told you one of the books that I make everybody read is a book that General Casey made me read when I was in the job, and thatâ€™sÂ Getting to Yes.Â Â Whatâ€™s the consensus we can reach here?Â Â Whatâ€™s the compromise?Â Â But what they told me in the course of the conversation rings true today.Â Â They said, â€œGeneral, we hate you.Â Â We hate the Americans.Â Â Youâ€™re occupiers.Â Â But we hate the Persians worseâ€â€”referring to the Shias as â€œPersians.â€Â Â So they were willing to accept our presence, because on the tyranny of hatred, we werenâ€™t the most hatedâ€”the Persians were.Â Â And us being there allowed them to have some latitude that they wouldnâ€™t have had if we left and a Shia-dominated government could take control of the operations.Â

Interviewer

Now, in these meetings at Allawiâ€™s house, youâ€™re working through an interpreter?

Rick Lynch

Yeah, sure.

Interviewer

And how difficult is that?

Rick Lynch

Oh, itâ€™s extremely difficult.Â Â I mean, in an ideal world, all of our leaders from all levels would be linguistsâ€”in an ideal world.Â Â I studied Russian at the Military Academyâ€”it served me well on a couple of occasions â€™cause I had Russians working for me in Kosovo, and I had Georgians working for me when I was a division commander in Iraq.Â Â And even though they donâ€™t want to speak Russian, they can speak Russian. Â

Rick Lynch

Ideally, before you deploy into a theater, you become a master of that language, because it facilitates, obviously, communication.Â Â And when youâ€™re working through an interpreter, you have to make sure youâ€™ve got the right interpreterâ€”Number One.Â Â That heâ€™s saying what you said, and heâ€™s saying what they said.Â Â Because if you donâ€™t have the right interpreter, you donâ€™t know how theÂ conversation went.Â Â So itâ€™s a whole added dimension.Â Â Luckily, the guy from the State Department that was with me spoke Arabic, so he had some insights into how it comesâ€”

Interviewer

Was he the interpreter, though, or he wasâ€”Â

Rick Lynch

No, he wasnâ€™t the interpreter.

Interviewer

And so the interpreterâ€”you have to decide, I guess, whether the interpreterâ€™s going to be a Shia or a Sunni, too, right?Â Â I mean is that â€”already thatâ€™s going to hold up a suspicious level for the Sunni leadership of these factions, right, if heâ€™s a Shia?

Rick Lynch

Most of our interpreters for senior leaders in Iraq were Americans.Â Â Not American soldiers, but rather Iraqisâ€”Americans of Iraqi descentâ€”who offered to come back to help interpret.Â Â So you were conscious in conversation whether their background was a Shia background or a Sunni background, and if you sensed some specific leaning, you had to be sensitive to that, no doubt about it.Â Â

Rick Lynch

But working through an interpreter is complicated.A A I mean, I still to this day donâ€™t understand.Â Â Iâ€™m the Chief of Staff of Kosovoâ€”29 nations, 600 peopleâ€”Iâ€™m there as the guy in charge.Â Â Iâ€™ve got six general officers that are working for me from different nations, and those folks could speak four or five different languagesâ€”they could.Â Â

Interviewer

So youâ€™re sitting around with theseâ€”letâ€™s say with one factionâ€™s leaders.Â Â One at a time, I guess, right, â€™cause you canâ€™t possibly bring all the factions in together?

Rick Lynch

Well, we didnâ€™t even know then nor do we know todayÂ how many factions there were.Â Â All I do know is when we had these conversations, it was about 16 people having a conversation with me and this member of the State Department.Â Â And they were disheveled, they were clearly exhausted, and they were willing to talk about what we could do and what they could do.Â Â The problem was, in the absence of a central leader, you couldnâ€™t solve all the problems.Â Â You could solve a local problem.

The Modern Soldier as Multi-Tasker
Interviewer

And what kind of problems are we talking about?Â Weâ€™re talking about problems of safety, and are we talking about problems of ownership, or all the above?

Rick Lynch

Well, itâ€™s problems of all the above. See, what people have to understandâ€”right now weâ€™re talking about my time in Iraq as a member of General Caseyâ€™s staff. But I went away, eight months later, I came back as a division commander, and spent 15 more months on the battlefield. And what people have to understand is the solution in places like Iraq is not a military solution. Itâ€™s a solution of â€œall of the above.â€ I spent as much time in all my jobs in Iraq focused on capacity-buildingâ€” building the government, building the economy, getting jobs, getting people employed, getting things working again, like the flow of waterâ€”as I did capturing and killing people.Â

Interviewer

So the modern soldier needs to be a multi-tasker, essentiallyâ€” right? Needs to be able to be a politician, a police chief, garbage collector, engineerâ€”as well as being a soldier?

Rick Lynch

Yeah, I mean, gone are the days where we need commissioned officers who have one skill set. I was an engineer officer, as we talked about earlier. For ten years, I was an armor officer. I commanded a tank battalion and a tank brigade. Thatâ€™s simpleâ€”doing one thingâ€”thatâ€™s simple. Â In todayâ€™s battlefield, youâ€™re doing multiple things simultaneously, and youâ€™ve got to be good at all of them.

Rick Lynch

When I went back as a division commander in a place called Arab Jabourâ€”which is a very, very difficult place that we couldnâ€™t touch before the surge, and the surge gave us the troops to touch itâ€”we had six months of continuous combat operations, in which we

killed or captured 6,000 members of the insurgency in that little area and turned that place around. But immediately, then, I had to turn my focus on capacity-building. How am I going to get the economy up? How am I going to get the government established? How am I going to get the road networks working? How am I going to get the clinics built, the schools going? And those are skill sets that I didnâ€™t have, nor did any of my staff have, â€™cause we werenâ€™t trained on capacity-buildingâ€”but that was the situation that we were in.

Interviewer

So how do you acquire those skills on the ready like that?Â

Rick Lynch

Well, we did it based on experiential learning, but thatâ€™s the wrong way to do it. I mean, I had all sorts of moneyâ€”Â

Interviewer

Experiential learning essentially means trial and error, right?

Rick Lynch

Exactly. I had all sorts of money available to me as a division commander in Iraq. We called it CERP funds, Commanderâ€™s Emergency Response Program fundsâ€”CERP funds. So I would find myself routinely deciding to throw CERP funds at a problem, and not really sure whether or not it was going to address the essence of the problem.

Rick Lynch

So, for example, my battle space, in previous years, had been the breadbasket of Iraq. It was the land between the rivers. Itâ€™s where all the wheat was grown. And all that was happening there when I was there was nothingâ€”just dirt and sand. So weâ€™re figuring out, well, how do we get the agriculture going again? So we would buy seed, and we would buy fertilizer, and weâ€™d try to get the irrigation systems working, with really no idea what we were doing. But we were just doing it because we knew it needed to be done.

Rick Lynch

We continued to work to get interagency involvement in what we were doing in Iraq. So, for example, having somebody from the Department of Agriculture, who really knew about growing things, on your team, was invaluable. And what I found over time is they would show up in drips and drabs. Thereâ€™d be one guy or two guys from USAID, or from Department of Agriculture, or something, and theyâ€™d become an important member of your staff, giving advice and counsel. Thatâ€™s what we did.

Rick Lynch

Same with building governments, we were building local governments in Iraq. We spent a lot of time focused on the national government, but the day-to-day operations were being handled by the local government. Now, whoâ€™s the mayor? Whoâ€™s the provincial council? Who are those people, and how do you get them to do what they need to do? I tell the story all the time ofâ€”hereâ€™s this guy from Texas who, given necessities, had become an expert chicken farmer and fish farmer. Because in my battle space, that was their source of livelihood prior to the war. There were a thousand fish farms, and there were

probably that many chicken farms as well. So we had to figure out how to help the Iraqi people take these fishâ€”these baby fish, these fingerlingsâ€”take them to their fish farm, grow them to some level of vibrancy, and transport them to market.

Rick Lynch

We were doing thatâ€”as a staff of a heavy division, thatâ€™s what we were doing. We actually designed a truck to allow them to transport fish to market. We actually figured out how weâ€™d put the right stuff in their local farms, so these fish could grow. In the chicken farming business, we went to Holland and bought 50,000 fertilized eggs, brought them down into the battle space, set up these incubators. I learned more about growing chickens and growing fish than I ever wanted to know or thought Iâ€™d need to know, but that was what we were doing.

Rick Lynch

Because in Iraq, candidly, on any given day, you probably only had about 10,000 terrorists or extremists, but you had a whole bunch of people shooting at you. And they were shooting at you because that was their only source of livelihood, and they were being paid by the terrorists and extremists to go shoot at Americans or plant roadside bombs. So we figured out if we could get them a livelihood so they could take care of their familyâ€”remember, the essence of an Iraqi is their identity with their family, theyâ€™re men of honorâ€”and if you could figure out how to pay them or help them with their livelihood so they can take care of the family, they didnâ€™t need to shoot at you. Thatâ€™s how you turn the tide, by building capacity.

Rick Lynch

And then we spent a lot of time with the Sons of Iraq program that a lot of folks have talked about. You take these people, who are really about the security of their areaâ€”thatâ€™s what they wanted, they wanted just like you and I want. They want their kids to be able to go to school. They want to have a job. They want to be able to flourish. They want to have health care. Theyâ€™re no different than we areâ€”they just speak a different language. So how do you get them to help you secure their local areas? How do you do that?

Rick Lynch

So we started the Sons of Iraq program, where we would pay the members of the village $8 a day to secure their environment. And indeed, weâ€™d find ourselves in situations where 78-year-old men would be sitting on the edge of their village with a knife, controlling access into the village. Because they knewâ€”they knew who the terrorists were, they knew who the extremists were. They wanted a secure environment, and if indeed you could give them a source of livelihoodâ€”like fish farming, poultry farming, or pay them as a member of Sons of Iraqâ€”then theyâ€™re going to secure their own area.

Interviewer

Now, this is laterâ€”this is during the surge when this happened, isnâ€™t that right?Â

Rick Lynch

Well, it started during my second tour.Â

Interviewer

Letâ€™s stay for a moment with your first tour, though, because I still have more questions.

A

Rick Lynch

Okay, yeah. Â

Interviewer

Tell me a little bit aboutâ€” Â

Rick Lynch

But all these things weâ€™re talking about carried over in both the tours.Â

Interviewer

Oh, Iâ€™m sure they did, yeah.Â

Rick Lynch

Right.

Interviewer

So General Caseyâ€”give me a sense of who he was, what it was like working with him, for him, what kind of challenges he faced, how he responded to them.Â

Rick Lynch

He is a magnificent human being. He is the ultimate war fighter. He is the perfect soldier-statesman. Heâ€™s a dedicated patriot. He spent 32 months of his life continuously in command of Multi-National Force-Iraq. There was not a job more complicated, more complex, more demanding. The very fact that he could do it for 32 continuous months, I still find to be amazing. He was very astute to what the issues were. He gave absolutely clear guidanceâ€”not just to the soldiers on the battlefield, but members of his staff, like me, as to what we needed to try to accomplish. He was always thinking three steps aheadâ€”not todayâ€™s problem, but whatâ€™s the problem of the future. And he, indeed, was the person, in my mind, who turned Iraq aroundâ€”but he doesnâ€™t get any of the credit, and I have a problem with that.

Interviewer

How do you see that he turned Iraq around?

Rick Lynch

Well, it was constant, deliberate focus on operations, in all the lines of effortâ€”on the security line of effort, on the communication line of effort, on the economic line of effort, on the governmentâ€™s line of effort. It was relentless pursuit of accomplishment. And nothing happens in Iraqâ€”or Afghanistanâ€”at the pace that you want it to happen. It just doesnâ€™t happen that quick. It takes a while, and he just had this continual passion to work his way through the issue.

Interviewer

Did you know him before you worked for him?

Rick Lynch

Yeah, when I was a battalion commander in the 1st Cavalry Division, for a period of time he was a brigade commander of a sister brigade, so we were in the same division at the same time, but I didnâ€™t work for him. I didnâ€™t really come in routine contact with him until I had that NATO mission in Naples and was trying to bring NATO into Iraqâ€”and then when I came back to be a member of his staff.

Media Relations
Interviewer

Now, you were in charge of handling the press during this time.

Rick Lynch

Yep.Â

Interviewer

Had you ever done anything like that before?Â

Rick Lynch

Nope.Â

Interviewer

And what was the experiential learning that you underwent in that process?Â

Rick Lynch

Well, it went kinda like this. Two months into the job, General Casey calls me in and said, â€œYouâ€™re now the Spokesman for the Force.â€ I explained to him I didnâ€™t want to be the Spokesman for the Force. He explained to me I didnâ€™t have a choice. No media training. When you become a general officer, they run you through two or three hoursâ€™ worth of media training, where they set you down like this and you look at a camera, but there is really no learning taking placeâ€”youâ€™re just checking a block.

Rick Lynch

And to be thrown in front of the cameraâ€”can you imagineâ€”this was in 2005, things were going wrong in Iraq. The media were always looking for bad news stories. I still today declare the national media to be a national embarrassment. It bothers me.

Rick Lynch

We would bring reporters to the battlefield, and Iâ€™d take them out as a spokesman, and later as a division commander, to see good things and to see bad things, and all it would ever play was bad things. I had senior editors of major newspapers in my office in Baghdad, and Iâ€™d say, â€œWhy is that? Why, if I show you good things and bad things, you only print the bad news?â€ He looked me in the eye and said, â€œBad news sells newspapers.â€ Same with the televised mediaâ€”it was an amazing thing to me that if I showed them clinics and schools and happy people, and theyâ€™d get it on tape, it would never show in the national media. But if it blew up, it wouldâ€”and theyâ€™d tell me, â€œIf it bleeds, it leads. Thatâ€™s what we do.â€ And I still find that to be frustrating.

Rick Lynch

Anyway, on a daily basis, for ten months in Iraq as the spokesman for the force and the Director for Strategic Effects, I was engaged with the media. Every Thursday, there was a press conference where live TV, 30 members of the media grilling me with questions and answersâ€”much like you see spokesmen do these days, but it was a very hostile environment. And I had not been trained for that, so it wasâ€”Â

Interviewer

Was that smart on the part of the leadership, to give you that kind of assignment when you had not any training?Â

Rick Lynch

Well, none of us had been trained. See, thatâ€™s the whole point. Weâ€™ve learned now, over time, that weâ€™ve got to do more than the four-hour block of instruction for our General Officer Corps, because itâ€™s not just the spokesman for the force carrying the message, but everybodyâ€™s got to carry the message. And you canâ€™t be hesitant to engage with the mediaâ€”youâ€™ve got to be proactive with the media. So weâ€™ve got better over time. But early, we werenâ€™t as prepared as we shouldâ€™ve been.Â

Interviewer

What did you learn in terms of lessons or advice that you would give to someone put in the position of dealing with the media in the future?Â

Rick Lynch

Yeah. I do this all the time. I teach classes on strategic communication and dealing with the media. Thereâ€™s really three things. One is, you have to be very proactive with the media. Youâ€™ve got to take them placesâ€”youâ€™ve got to get them out of the Green Zone in Baghdad, youâ€™ve got to put them on a helicopterâ€”youâ€™ve got to take them places. Youâ€™ve got to be transparent with them, youâ€™ve got to be openâ€”when they call and want a interview, youâ€™ve got to grant them the interview. Youâ€™ve got to establish personal relationships with members of the press. Youâ€™ve got to do thatâ€”regardless of whether you want to do it, youâ€™ve got to do it.

Rick Lynch

In the course of the interview, itâ€™s impossible to get in trouble with the media, as long as you donâ€™t violate two things. One is, you canâ€™t lie, â€™cause if you lie, youâ€™re going to get caught in the lie. Commissioned officers donâ€™t lie anyway. I was taught here at West Point that you wonâ€™t lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those that doâ€”so commissioned officers normally donâ€™t lie. But if you lie at the media, itâ€™s terminal, â€™cause theyâ€™ll catch you in the lie. And the second thing is, youâ€™ve got to stay in your lane. Youâ€™ve got to talk about things that youâ€™re involved with, and if you get asked a question thatâ€™s outside your lane, donâ€™t pontificateâ€”just talk about the stuff you know.

Rick Lynch

And then you use the Colin Powell adage. Colin Powell taught us when you deal with the media, they get to ask the questions, you get to give the answers, and they donâ€™t have to match. So what are your messages youâ€™re trying to get outâ€”what are those points that you want to keep hammering home. I mean, strategic communication is consistent

themes and messages delivered at high frequency over multiple media. So what are those consistent themes and messages you want to get out. And every chance you get out, whether itâ€™s a TV interview or print interviewâ€”in todayâ€™s world, whether itâ€™s social mediaâ€”consistently get those themes and messages out at high frequency, and use all the different media, and you might get your word out.Â

Interviewer

So this is the old â€œanswer the question you want to be asked, not necessarily the question you were asked.â€Â

Rick Lynch

No, thatâ€™s exactly right. I find many of my colleagues struggling in interviews because they havenâ€™t prepared themselves with â€œwhat are these messages Iâ€™m trying to get out.â€ And they were in a reactive mode dealing with the reporter, who was trying to pull a string on something, and they found themselves in an awkward situation.

Interviewer

You ever have any blunders through this process?

Rick Lynch

Oh, sure.

Interviewer

Talk about some of those.Â

Rick Lynch

Iâ€™ve made multiple mistakes. As I think through the every Thursday event, I spent a lot of time preparing, a lot of time preparing. But it would seem that every Thursday morning prior to the interview, something bad would happen, and Iâ€™d be caught unawares. So rather than just say, â€œI donâ€™t know, Iâ€™ll get back to you,â€ you try to feed them the information you do have, and if thatâ€™s not enough, theyâ€™ll call you on it, so. You cannotâ€”and I made this mistakeâ€”keep saying, â€œItâ€™s under investigation,â€ because they get tired of hearing that answer. At some point in time, youâ€™ve got to give them what you know, and not just say, â€œItâ€™s under investigation.â€

Interviewer

So not only can you not lie, you shouldnâ€™t stonewall, either, in a senseâ€”right?Â

Rick Lynch

Yeah. You canâ€™t stonewall. They know when theyâ€™re beingâ€” they, the mediaâ€”know when theyâ€™re being stonewalled. Youâ€™ve got to beâ€”youâ€™ve got to give them as much as you can. Remember, theyâ€™re doing their job. Theyâ€™re trying to tell the story, and theyâ€™re either going to tell your story, or theyâ€™re going to tell their story, and your technique has to be to get them to tell your story.Â

Interviewer

Did you form relationships with certain reporters that ended up being really important to you

and important to conveying the story completely to the press?A

Rick Lynch

Yeah, I found certain members of the media to be very easy to deal with, and certain members of the media that would routinely try to help me tell a story I wanted to get out, as long as I helped them shape their story, and I found that. So I developed personal relationships. What I do advocate is, in dealing with the media, youâ€™re never off the record. People find themselves in awkward situations, and theyâ€™re being told, â€œHey, this is off the record,â€ and then it comes back to bite them later. So what Iâ€™ve realized in the course of my career is, youâ€™re never having a casual conversation with a member of the media.Â

Interviewer

Of course, even if you go off the record, they know that and incorporate that in their understanding of whatever is the next thing that theyâ€™re writing, right?Â

Rick Lynch

Well, thatâ€™s exactly right.Â

Interviewer

So nothingâ€™s really off the record anyway, because itâ€™s impossibleâ€”itâ€™s like erasing part of their brain.

Rick Lynch

Well, thatâ€™s exactly right. So youâ€™ve just got toâ€”youâ€™ve got to be cautious. Theyâ€™re not evil people. See, thereâ€™s only a few people out there who I consider to be evil, and none of them are members of the media. Theyâ€™re not evil people, but they got a job theyâ€™re trying to do, and you got a job youâ€™re trying to do, and youâ€™ve got to work that out.

Interagency Coordination, or Lack Thereof
Interviewer

So that ends your first appointmentâ€”is that rightâ€”to Iraq, was theâ€”

Rick Lynch

Yeah, I wasâ€”we just talked about the STRATCOM piece of what I did with Strategic Effects, but I also did all the stuff with the U.S. Embassy and the country team, trying to make sure that we approached the issues in Iraq in a interagency perspective and not just the military perspectiveâ€”and that was difficult.Â

Interviewer

Letâ€™s continue with that a little bit. So when youâ€™re saying that, youâ€™re really talking about some of the things you mentioned before about expanding the range of tasks that you needed to conduct and manage, right, beyond just the military.

Rick Lynch

Yeah. Rememberâ€”

Interviewer

Traditional military.

Rick Lynch

Remember, I just told you that I found myself doing lots of things in Iraq for which I was not prepared, but there were members of the interagency who were supposed to do that for a living. I mean, if youâ€™re trying to get things growing, you got the Department of Agriculture. If youâ€™re trying to establish international aid, you got the USAID chief for international aidâ€”USAID. If youâ€™re trying to build governance, you got the Department of State.

Rick Lynch

The reason the military found themselves doing it a lot is â€™cause nobody else was there. You had a small presence of the State Department and the other members of the interagency there in Iraq, doing the best they can, but it was a small presence. I mean, theyâ€™ll tell you today, the Department of State, if you add everybody together, is smaller than one of our brigade combat teams. And in Iraq, we had 100,000 people or soâ€”soldiers. We had a handful of members of the State Department.

Rick Lynch

We tried to create these things called Provisional Reconstruction Teamsâ€”PRTs. Ambassador Khalilzad had been in Afghanistan, where they had set up PRTs, and brought that idea into Iraq, and he called General Casey and I in his office and said, â€œHey, we got this idea for PRTs in Iraq. Letâ€™s make this happen.â€ So we designed these Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Thereâ€™s 18 provinces in Iraq, and weâ€™re going to put a PRT in each place, and itâ€™d have a military component, have a State Department component, a USAID componentâ€”it was interagency at best.

Rick Lynch

But we could never get those resourced by anybody other than the military. So you found yourself as the military doing the work of the State Department, the Agriculture Department, the Department of Treasury, those kinds of things. And that continued to evolveâ€”when I went back again as a division commander, the PRTs were better resourced, but still not adequately resourced, so that was a major piece of my first deployment, is deal with the interagency and try to solicit support for what weâ€™re doing in Iraq.

Interviewer

Weâ€™ll come back to this at the end of the interview, of our last interview. But Iâ€™m just struck by the number of things that you learned that if you were drafting a plan for this invasion in the future, you would have changed or have different. I mean, it sounds like this is one of them.

Rick Lynch

Yeah, no doubt about it. I think weâ€™ve all grown from this experience. And we understand, itâ€™s not just about the initial phases of the operation. Youâ€™ve got to plan out in detail all aspects of the operation, to include when youâ€™re evolving from combat operations to capacity-building and national reconstruction. Youâ€™ve got to think through all aspects of that.Â

Interviewer

Youâ€™re talking about capacity-building and national reconstruction, and all these different skills that you needed to get on the ready. It strikes me that one component of doing this isâ€” Itâ€™s one thing if youâ€™re doing this in the middle of western Texas. Itâ€™s another thing if youâ€™re doing it in the middle of Iraq. And not only is it a strange place, but itâ€™s a place that had to be rife with corruption, particularly in the chaos of the post-war period. Did you find that?

Rick Lynch

Oh, yeah. I mean, thatâ€™s a significant piece of what youâ€™re dealing with over there. Somebody coined the idea of clear, hold, and build. I was in Iraq when that phrase was starting to gain some traction. It wasnâ€™t anything we generated within Iraq, but it became the thing we were all talking about. And if you think about what we were doing, generally it mapped out what we were doing. You first did the major combat operations and cleared an areaâ€”cleared an area from the criminals, the insurgents, and the extremistsâ€”and thatâ€™s still very important. Iâ€™m not convinced that the people have captured the fact that itâ€™s not all about insurgents. Itâ€™s about bad people doing a variety of bad things. So once you clear it, then you figure out how to hold it by a permanent presence. And then you can start buildingâ€”and then you can start building.

Rick Lynch

You got to be thinking about the building piece before you start the clearing operationâ€”you have to do it.Â Do I have the assets available?Â Do I have the resources?Â Do I have the people necessary to do the building piece?Â And donâ€™t launch the clearing piece until youâ€™ve got the building piece laid on.Â We havenâ€™tâ€”when we start talking about my operations as a division commander, Iâ€™ll talk about it in some level of detailâ€” but you have to think through all aspects of it.Â Youâ€™ve got to be thinking about reconstruction before youâ€™re thinking about launching artillery shells.

Interviewer

What sort of obstacles does the corruption pose to you, though?

Rick Lynch

Ohâ€”you just accept the factÂ that the corruption is there.Â Â See, if you try to impose your willâ€”I was having a major conversation with the National Security Advisor in Iraq when I was there the first time.Â Â And what had happened is he had told me something on one day, and the next day he said something totally different, and I confronted him.Â Â I said, â€œHey, yesterday you said this.Â Â Today youâ€™re saying this.Â Â Whyâ€™d you do that?â€Â Â He says, â€œIn Iraq, sometimes one man has to be two people.â€Â Â Thatâ€™s foreign to us, as Americans.Â Â This is what we do, this is what we say, this is what weâ€™re going to continue to do.Â Â But he explained to me that sometimes in Iraq, one man has to be two people.Â Â

Rick Lynch

We knew for a fact that we were doing operations using money as a punition.Â Â A lot of that money was going to be filtered from the top for corruption, and a portion of the money would go to do what youâ€™re trying to accomplishâ€”that was there.Â Â You tried to work through that the best you could, but you just acknowledged that it was there.Â Â And

youA could confront them all day long, but it wasnâ€™t going to change anything.

Interviewer

So thereâ€™s always somebodyâ€”you sort of calculate that into the equation, that youâ€™re going to have some money skimmed off the topâ€”somebodyâ€™s going to pull this string or that string to get their own self-interest taken care of.

Rick Lynch

You just have to accept the fact.Â Â That doesnâ€™t mean that you think itâ€™s right, but you canâ€™t impose your culture on other people.Â Â Thatâ€™s the way it is in Iraq and in Afghanistan.Â Â And we can talk about it all we want to talk about it, but if youâ€™re trying to get something done, youâ€™ve got to accept it, and then youâ€™ve got to work around it.Â Â Thatâ€™s where you are.

Interviewer

Did you find the civilian leadershipâ€”Bremer was still in control when you were there?

Rick Lynch

When I was working my way into Iraq as part of the NATO force, Bremer was there.Â Â When I came back for my first complete tour in Iraq, it was Ambassador Khalilzad.

Interviewer

I see.Â Â Soâ€”

Rick Lynch

And it wasâ€”yeah.

Interviewer

Did you find themÂ to be in concert with what you wanted to do or needed to do, or did you find them to be an obstacle?

Rick Lynch

Well, when you talk about being culturally aware, itâ€™s also inter-culture issues within the U.S. government.Â Â Youâ€™ve got to be aware of the State Department culture, youâ€™ve got to be aware of the culture of USAID.Â Â And early in my tenure, Iâ€™m trying to think out, â€œWhy canâ€™t they do things the way we do things in the military? â€Â Â And then you realize, they havenâ€™t been trained to do that, and itâ€™s not the way they normally do business.Â Â

Interviewer

For example, we are, in the military, master plannersâ€”now, acknowledging what I just said around doing a good job planning a reconstruction firstâ€”weâ€™re getting better at that.Â Â But we spend a lot of time with the military decision-making process, doing mission analysis, developing a course of action, making the decision, writing a plan, and executing.Â Â The State Department doesnâ€™t do that, and you have to acknowledge the factÂ that they donâ€™t do it that way.Â Â

Rick Lynch

So there was a cultural awareness that I learned by dealing with the interagency process.Â Â None of them were evil.Â Â The problem that we had is that there wasnâ€™t enough of them, and when they did come in, they had significant restrictions as to where they could go.Â Â You couldnâ€™t run Iraq from the Green Zoneâ€”it didnâ€™t work that way.Â Â You had to get out.Â Â You had to mount up on the helicopter, walk the streets, meet with the locals, to get things done.Â Â A lot of the members of the interagency were restricted to stay within the Green Zone.

Interviewer

So that made it much harder for you, I imagine, because from the Armyâ€™s point of view, you have knowledge that they donâ€™t have.

Rick Lynch

Rightâ€”no, exactly.Â Â And it got better over time.Â Â Weâ€™re still talking about what was there in 2005 and 2006.Â Â I mean, the State Departmentâ€”the Director, the Secretary of State acknowledged that they needed to get more people there.Â Â They were working to incentivize.Â Â See, in all my deployments, nobody ever came to me and said, â€œWould you like to go?â€Â They say, â€œGo.â€Â Â In the State Department, you had to say, â€œWould you like to go?â€Â Â And they could say â€œYesâ€ or â€œNo.â€Â Â So I know they were working to incentivize deployments, I think they were working to try to be able to be more directiveâ€”but itâ€™s part of the cultural issues.

Combat Strategy, Surge, and Outlook in Iraq
Interviewer

All right, so letâ€™s go to your second tourâ€”Weâ€™re going to the division command periodâ€”tell me how that happened.

Rick Lynch

Yeah, so Iâ€™m in Iraq from May of 2005 till May of 2006. General Casey calls me in his office in the April time frame and says, â€œYouâ€™ve just been selected to command the 3rd Infantry Divisionâ€”the Rock of the Marneâ€”and youâ€™re going to leave Iraq in May, and youâ€™re going to take command of the division in June of 2006.â€ So I packed up out of Iraq, went to pick up my family, who was still in Texas, brought them to Fort Stewart, Georgia, and assumed command of the 3rd Infantry Division in June of 2006.Â

Interviewer

This mustâ€™ve been very exciting for you as a career soldierâ€”this is a terrific assignment, right?

Rick Lynch

Yeah. I mean, it wasâ€”I had mentioned it earlier, that when I looked at my military career at the beginning, my aspiration was to be a battalion commander. And when I walked in the battalion command in 1993, I declared victory. That was what I wanted to do. So I commanded the 1st Battalion of the 8th Cavalry, Mustangs, my way, 1993 to 1995, and I just had a blast. As I look back on my career, the time I cherish most is my time as a battalion commander, â€™cause youâ€™re right there amongst the soldiers and their families. You can touch them everyday. You got about 800 people in an Armored Task

Force, and itâ€™s powerful.

Rick Lynch

Anyway, every day since then has been about service, so I never found myself aspiring to be a brigade commander or be a division commander or be a general officer. I never did that, but it was about service. So given the opportunity to command at the division level was indeed a great opportunity to serveâ€”and to do it in a storied division like the 3rd Infantry Division. I had never been in the 3rd Infantry Division until I took command of the 3rd Infantry Division. I had never been on Fort Stewart until I took command of Fort Stewart. So it goes back to experiential learning. But in June of 2006, it was indeed a great big deal in my military career to assume command from Major General Glenn Webster and become Marne Six.Â

Interviewer

And what was the firstâ€”how did you greet the divisionâ€”let me put it that way?

Rick Lynch

Yeah. The division had deployed under the command of General Webster, and I just recentlyâ€”

Interviewer

Right from the beginning of the war, right?

Rick Lynch

Yeah, right. They were part of the march to Baghdadâ€”a critical part of the march to Baghdad, yeah. So it was a storied division not just from the World War I days and the Marne River, but throughout, and they had made a significant contribution in Iraq in their first deployment. And I was going to lead them on their second deployment (and they just returned from their third deployment). But the focus was preparing for that next deployment, and I had a general idea of when we were going to go back to Iraq and where we were going to go when we went to Iraq, so as I greeted the division, I talked about accolades for what they had done, and talking about preparing for what we will do.

Rick Lynch

Because the essence of it was preparing for combat operations and redeployed in theater in a very difficult time. We thought we had about 12 months to prepareâ€”until the surge was announced. And what we found ourselves was once the surge was announced, an element of the surge were the brigades of the 3rd Infantry Division and the division headquarters. So when I had scheduled a six-month training window to deploy the division headquarters to the north to take command of Multi-National Division-North, that was truncated from six months to six weeks. And I was going to createâ€”not just assume command ofâ€”but create a Multi-National Division-Center, looking at the southern belts and the southern provinces of Iraq. So the focus from Day 1 was on combat operations, preparing for deployment. We had no idea that we were to deploy as quick as we did, and that was a issue of the Surge.

Rick Lynch

Now, when that happens, are you frustrated with your leadership, like, â€œI need my six monthsâ€”Iâ€™m going in there unprepared now?â€ Or do you just accept the

assignment? I know that â€œstiff upper lipâ€ is the motto or whateverâ€”you do what you have to doâ€”but inside, are you saying your frustration is just boiling over at that point?Â

Rick Lynch

What you learn from deployments in the theater is the absolute need for flexibility. If you think youâ€™re going to predict the future, itâ€™s not going to happen. So when it was announced, I canâ€™t say I was surprised. It was interesting how it played out. I took command in June of 2006, and in January of 2007, we were doing one of our early training exercises in preparation for deployment. And I just sent my leadership to Iraq, to northern Iraq, to do a reconnaissance and meet me at Fort Leavenworth, Kansasâ€”and that was in January of 2007.

Rick Lynch

Then I get a phone call from Ray Odierno, whoâ€™s the corps commander in Iraq at that time, and he says, â€œHey, Rick, donâ€™t think about coming in six monthsâ€”think about coming in in six weeks. Donâ€™t think about going northâ€”think about going south.â€ I had the leadership all together, and it was interesting how it played out, â€™cause we were all there thinking about a deployment in six months and going northâ€”and in the course of the conversation, that all changed. It all changed. But the power of the American Army is we have that level of flexibility. So to answer your question, I wasnâ€™t frustrated. If it was what the nation needed us to do, thatâ€™s what we were going to do. I did find myself having to draw a red line in the sand, because there was this drumbeat to get in there early, get in there early, get in there earlyâ€”and I refused to go there early and unprepared.

Rick Lynch

And I knew precisely what I needed to do to train the division headquarters and my brigades to deploy, based on my experience. So, for example, they say â€œDivision headquarters have to be able to do these 137 tasks when they deploy to theater.â€ And if I had six months to train the division headquarters for those, I wouldâ€™ve got it done, but I knew I couldnâ€™t do that. So I said, â€œOf those 137, what are the most critical?â€ And I found 38 tasks that I knew I had to be able to do, and I focused on those during that six-week training period.

Interviewer

What are they? Give me an example of what you mean by that. Just give me a handful of those 38 tasks.

Rick Lynch

Well, first off, theyâ€™re critical command and control tasks. Youâ€™re going to go into theaterâ€”we, as an army, are now basedâ€”weâ€™re modular, a modular army. I was going to go into theater and command and control brigades that werenâ€™t part of the 3rd Infantry Division. So establishing command and control of unknown forces in an unknown area was job Number Oneâ€”figure out how to do that. So I had a brigade from the 10th Mountain Division that worked for me, a brigade from the 25th Infantry Division that worked for me. Over time, I had a brigade from the 82nd, a brigade from the 101stâ€”so you had to be able to do that, so you had to figure out what was the battle space, and howâ€™re you going to establish those command and control linkages? That was Job 1.

Rick Lynch

You knew there were going to be critical tasks that you had to be able to do as division headquarters to allocate resources. See, in theater, what youâ€™re doing to await the main effort, is youâ€™re allocating resources. And those resources might be people, it might be time, it might be moneyâ€”but you had to be skilled at that capability before you deployed. You had to be skilled on certain tasks, like downed aircraft recovery, â€™cause you knew you probably would have to encounter that, and as a division headquarters, youâ€™re going to control the assets to make that happen. So we focused on thatâ€”and oh, by the way, the first week after we got there, we were doing a downed aircraft mission.

Interviewer

Is that right.

Rick Lynch

So it was the right thing to focus on in training, and Iâ€™m glad that we didâ€”so those kinds of things. You cull from that large list, what are those things you know you need to do. You dialogue with your commanderâ€”in this case, it was Ray Odierno. And I was Rayâ€™s Assistant Division Commander in the 4th Division, when Ray was the 4th Division Commanderâ€”so we already had a personal relationship. And I said, â€œOkay, well, define for me precisely what you want my division headquarters to do in theater.â€ And he said, â€œYouâ€™ve got to block the accelerance of violence into Baghdad.â€ So we had to figure out what that meant while we were in training, and then focus on those tasks.

Interviewer

So six weeks later, youâ€™re deploying.Â

Rick Lynch

Yep, and we went in March, and createdâ€”

Interviewer

Of â€™07 now.

Rick Lynch

March of â€™07, and created Multi-National Division, the Center, on the 1st of April of 2007.Â

Interviewer

Now, tell me, as youâ€™re doing thisâ€”now, there had been a debate here at home as to whether the surge was necessary, and whether it was taking us deeper into a war thatâ€™s already unpopular. We also had, early on in the war, a feeling, I think shared across the Army, that there were not enough soldiers in Iraq Â deployed to be able to handle the tasks necessary. You also knew from your own personal experience there, that only the Army had enough people to handle the kinds of tasks that, when you were there, you were asked to doâ€”that youâ€™re actually doing State Department work, and AID work, and all. So how did you feel, personally, about the decision of the surge? Was it too little too late, was it the right moment, was it going to be effective, did you worry about its effectiveness?Â

Rick Lynch

Yeah. The phrase they taught me as a cadet at West Point applied. It was intuitively obvious to the casual observer that we needed more troops in Iraq. All the time I was there, it was clear. You could talk to the platoon leaders, to the division commandersâ€”and the resounding theme was we didnâ€™t have enough troops.Â

Interviewer

From the beginning of the war, straight through.

Rick Lynch

From the beginning of the war, straight through. What we had enough troops to do was to conduct operations and then leave. It doesnâ€™t work that way in counterinsurgency operations. You canâ€™t conduct an operation and then leaveâ€”â€™cause if you do that, you mightâ€™ve had limited success, but when you leave, everybody you left behind are going to be massacred, because they helped the Coalition. So you really had to do this clear, whole buildâ€”and you could only do that if you had adequate troops. And if you didnâ€™t have adequate troops, it wasnâ€™t going to happen.

Interviewer

Let me pause you here. Going back to the first days of the war, is this going to the top of the Pentagon leadership, a mistake in judgment as to what kind of war we were getting into?Â

Rick Lynch

Well, I think General Shinseki said it best. He said, â€œWe think weâ€™re going to need about this many troops to be able to accomplish the mission that we think is going to play out in Iraq.â€ And then we went in with less than that number, and I think that was a mistake.

Interviewer

And General Shinseki was punished for saying that.Â

Rick Lynch

Well, Iâ€™ve got five mentors in the United States Armyâ€”heâ€™s one of the mentors. He was my division commander when I was a battalion commander. Heâ€™s a man of principle. He was asked a question, he answered the question based on his professional knowledge. And indeed, as you sayâ€”whether you call it punishment or notâ€”he was listened to less as a result of that.Â

Interviewer

Alright, coming back to the question of the Surge, thenâ€”Â

Rick Lynch

Yeah.Â

Interviewer

A decision that was welcome then and shouldâ€™ve been made earlierâ€”is that what your feeling was, if you go with your sense of the lack of troops?

Rick Lynch

Oh, by all means. I mean, there was no doubt in our mindâ€”where were those areas that we needed to reach out and touch. And we could if we had sufficient forces. So the area that I occupiedâ€”in the southern belts of Baghdad, in the southern provincesâ€”was that area that all along we knew if weâ€™d had more troops we could turn it around, and we didnâ€™t have enough troops, so we could never turn it around. This place called Arab Jabour, which is southeast of Baghdad, was a den of iniquity of al-Qaedaâ€”we knew that all along. We knew it all along.

Interviewer

Of al-Qaeda in Iraq.

Rick Lynch

Yeah, al-Qaeda in Iraq.Â Â We could reach out and smack â€™em, but then we would leave.Â Â And thatâ€™s the reason you couldnâ€™t build this security.Â Â See, when we talk aboutÂ the Sons of Iraq, it was clear to me what was happening.Â Â If you went to a place and conducted an operation, the locals would ask two questions.Â Â The first question was, â€œAre you going to stay?â€Â Â And if you convinced them the answer was â€œYes,â€ the next question was, â€œHow can we help?â€Â Â But if they werenâ€™t convinced you were going to stay, they werenâ€™t going to help you, because they were going to be retaliated against once you left.Â Â

Rick Lynch

So the troop surge gave us the forces we needed to take operations in Iraq.Â Â And Iâ€™m still amazed to this day people want to debate whether or not the surge was successful.Â Â I mean, we turned that place around.Â Â It was major combat operations at the beginning part of the Surge.Â Â We worked to build capacity after the combat operations, and that allowed us to get to the state of play weâ€™re in today.

Interviewer

So when you could reach out and you could smack al-Qaeda in Iraqâ€”until you had the Surge, we couldnâ€™tâ€”we wouldnâ€™tâ€”because we knew what the repercussions would be.

Rick Lynch

Yeah, exactly.Â Â And if we did it, we put everybody, all the locals, at risk.Â Â When I was talking to the Sunni insurgents in my previous tour, they would remind me of thatâ€”â€œHey, if you guys will stay, weâ€™ll help.Â Â But if you ainâ€™t going to stay, all youâ€™re going to do is â€™cause a problem that we got to respond to once you leave.â€

Interviewer

Was some of this the residue of the first Gulf War, too, with the impression that we left with was that we did not complete the task.Â Â We didnâ€™t go to Baghdad.Â Â You know what Iâ€™m referring to.

Rick Lynch

Yeah, it could be.Â Â I mean, it could be.Â Â Itâ€™s hard to think for them, but they

couldâ€™ve watched the pattern with the first Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosovoâ€”how committed are you, how long are you going to stay?

Interviewer

The irony here, of course, is that part of their resentment is that weâ€™re an occupying force.Â Â And yet, what they want us to do is to stay and be an occupying force.

Rick Lynch

Well, itâ€™s the lesser of the evils, thatâ€™s what it is.Â Â I mean, if youâ€™re there, youâ€™re an occupier.Â Â If you leave, theyâ€™re going to be intimidated.Â Â Maybe you should stay.Â Â Itâ€™s the yin and the yang.

Interviewer

Well, itâ€™s the fact that when youâ€™re in these countries where these ethnic tensions are so rich, and whereÂ people are still having to live togetherâ€”itâ€™s like what happened when the iron hand leaves Yugoslavia.Â Â All those old ethnic tensions boil overâ€” thereâ€™s nobody to keep control of it.Â Â So the occupying force plays that role, is that right?

Rick Lynch

See, thereâ€™sâ€”when I give presentations these days, I highlight two of my concerns for our nation.Â Â One concern is we have a short-term memory.Â Â Thereâ€™s a large number of the American people whoâ€™ve forgot all about 9/11.Â Â In fact, today, if you were to ask the American people whatâ€™s on their mind, what worries them, in a list of 1 to 10, the top would be the economy, the deficit.Â Â Number 10 would be the global war on terrorism, â€™cause we forgot what happened.

Interviewer

Of course we forgot, because there hasnâ€™t been another major terrorist attack since 9/11, which may have been because we attacked it like that.

Rick Lynch

Exactly.Â Â The second concern I have is our nation wants to rush to a conclusion.Â Â We went to Bosnia for a yearâ€” rememberâ€”about 20 years ago.Â Â This issue in Iraq and Afghanistan isÂ not going to be solved any time soon.Â Â The Army leadership is very clearâ€”â€œWe think weâ€™re at war for another decade.Â Â Weâ€™ve been at war for a decade.Â Â We think weâ€™re at war for another decade, as we work our way through this global war on terrorism.â€Â Â So this whole idea that itâ€™s going to be solved sometime soonâ€”nobody believes that, nobody in uniform believes thatâ€”because of the years of hatred, the difficulty in establishing a government, the difficulty in establishing an economyâ€”and if you walk away prematurely, it goes back to the way it was.

Interviewer

There again, something Iâ€™d like to come back to later, but are you optimistic for Iraq, or are you pessimistic for Iraq, as we withdraw?

Rick Lynch

Iâ€™m realistic for Iraq, which tends toward pessimism.Â Â Sitting there in Iraq, 2006,

Golden Mosque blows up, everything changes.A A There are still people in Iraq who donâ€™t want us to leave.Â Â This whole idea that weâ€™re going to leave is causing some people some concern,Â so they could do something that would cause us to have to stay longer, or make a decision to leave anyway. Â

Rick Lynch

The struggle with the government of Iraq in establishing their governmentâ€”even though we helped them through establishing an infrastructure and conducting electionsâ€”I mean, you see where we are now?Â Â What, eight or nine months after the elections, we still havenâ€™t formed a government?Â Â And when they do form a government, theyâ€™re talking about ostracizing the Sunni population â€”thatâ€™s a problem.Â Â So when you ask me if Iâ€™m optimistic or pessimistic, Iâ€™m realistic, based on years of experienceâ€”and candidly, that probably verges towards pessimism.

Interviewer

So back toâ€”you went with the 3rdÂ ID.

Rick Lynch

Yeah.

Interviewer

You arrived in-countryâ€”then what happens?

Rick Lynch

Interesting.Â Â There wasnâ€™t even a division headquarters for us to occupy, because Multinational Division-Center did not exist.Â Â Multi-National Division-Baghdad had that entire areaâ€”not just Baghdad,Â but all the surrounding areas, to include the southern provinces of Karbala, Najaf, Wasit provinceâ€”those are all General Joe Filâ€™s problem.Â Â Joe Fil commanded the 1stÂ Cavalry Division, he is my best friend in the United States Army.Â Â But MND-B had too much of an area of responsibility, so General Odierno said, â€œWeâ€™ve got to bring in another division headquarters and create a new Multi-National Division.Â Â Letâ€™s call it Multi-National Division-Center.â€Â Â And he wanted our headquarters to be at Victory Base to facilitate coordination with the 1stÂ Cavalry Division, so we actually occupied a barracks complex.Â Â We went from a barracks complex to division headquarters in the course of about three months, and you can imagine the complexity of that. Â

Rick Lynch

As I say, immediately we fell in and took control of battle space that had already been occupied by elements of 10thÂ Mountain Division, 25thÂ Infantry Division.Â Â So I had to establish myself as the commander for those brigades whoâ€™d been serving in combat for eight orÂ ten months.Â Â So that was a complexity that we dealt with right away.Â Â It shows the strength of the modular Army because I knew what their capability were, because thatâ€™s what we trained.Â Â We trained to standard, so we worked through that.

Interviewer

It was never any feeling, in that instance, either from you or from those youâ€™re leading that, â€œWhat does this guy know?Â Â How could he come in here now and take over when weâ€™ve been doing this?â€

Rick Lynch

Oh, that feelingâ€™s always there.Â Â I mean, youâ€™re naive if you believe that itâ€™s not.Â Â So hereâ€™s a new guy coming inâ€”even though Iâ€™ve been in Iraq beforeâ€”and Iâ€™m now the division commander of this battle space that theyâ€™ve been occupying eight or ten months.Â Â And if Iâ€™d have went in and said, â€œOkay, hereâ€™s my plan, hereâ€™s what weâ€™re going to do,â€ Iâ€™d have met with great resistance.Â Â So what I trained my staff to do, is they get there and listen more than we talk.Â Â For about the first six weeks, get a sense of whatâ€™s going on, what the complications areâ€”and then impose our will as the division headquarters.

Interviewer

So whatâ€™d you learn from these guys as you got in there?Â Â What were the peculiaritiesÂ to this part of Iraq?

Rick Lynch

Well, it became very clear to me, those voids that we had to fill with the elements of the Surge as they came in.Â Â Remember, the division headquarters went in as the headquarters, but the surge brigades didnâ€™t come in at the same time I did.Â Â So I had to be figuring out where am I going to place the 3rdÂ Brigade of the 3rdÂ Division, and the 2ndÂ Brigade of the 3rdÂ Divisionâ€”and then, ultimately, the 4thÂ Brigade of the 3rdÂ Divisionâ€”as they arrived in as part of the Surge.Â Â And I had to spend a lot of time talking to the guys on the ground, saying, â€œWhere are those voids?Â Â Where are those places where we all know the enemyâ€™s been, and is hanging out, and nobody has been able to reach out and touch them?â€

Interviewer

At the same time, this had to be very exciting, â€™cause now you suddenly had the resources to do the job which you may not have felt you couldâ€™ve done if you had been assigned there before, right?

Rick Lynch

Oh yeah.Â Â All of usâ€”I spent a lot of time with Joe Fil, Commander of the 1stÂ Cavalry Division, and he was in a situation where he was asked to do stuff for which he wasnâ€™t having the resources.Â Â So when I came in, he could collapse and focus onÂ Baghdad, because that became his battle spaceâ€”Baghdadâ€”and rely on me to worry about the southern belts and the southern provinces.Â Â So all of us were elated that we were in a situationâ€” finallyâ€”where not only do we have the mission, but the resources with which to accomplish the mission.

Interviewer

So tell me how you executed this, then.

Rick Lynch

It was clear to me that the first period of time was going to be major combat operations to do the clear piece of clear, hold, and build.Â Â So we focusedâ€”we had ten named division operations, Marne Thunderbolt being the first named operation in this butt-ugly place called Arab Jabour.Â Â So we planned major combat operations, to include dropping 30,000 pounds of bombs in 13 seconds at specific targets within Arab Jabour.Â Â So it was

a joint and combined operation, it was pureA kinetics, and we had to take over that battle space.

Interviewer

What were the targets?

Rick Lynch

Well, these were known locations where the insurgency was living and thrivingâ€”thatâ€™s where they were.Â Â We knew that from a relationship with the locals.Â Â We knew that from elements of intelligence, wherever we got it from.Â Â But I could pinpoint 13 places where they were, and I needed to dislodge them.Â Â So we did a major prep of the battlefield, launched in major elements of ground forces, and then conducted our operations.

Interviewer

Now, these targets, I assume, are embedded in civilian areasâ€” thatâ€™s what they would do, right?

Rick Lynch

Some of them.Â Â I mean, one of the clear complications in operations in a place like is collateral damage.Â Â So youâ€™re very attunedâ€”is this indeed an enemy target that you could service and not affect the local civilians, or was it indeed so engrained with the local civilian populace that youâ€™re going to have collateral damage?

Rick Lynch

So you had to think through all that.Â Â Before you label it as a target, you had to think through that.Â Â And then certain targets I kept at my level for permission to execute.

Interviewer

And so you would sometimes make the decision, knowing there would be collateral damage, knowing that some of the civilians would be lost.

Rick Lynch

Well, we made it a pointâ€”as much as possibleâ€”to work to minimize collateral damage, but it was never pure.Â Â You could never think that, â€œHey, this is nothing but enemy, so I can go whack all these people,â€ because indeed the enemy weâ€™re fighting in Iraq, then and now, and in Afghanistan as well, tend to be relatively cowardly and find themselves hanging out with innocent civilians to preclude being attacked.Â Â

Rick Lynch

So there were indeed situations where I, as a division commander, or my subordinate commanders, had to look closely at a target and determine what the collateral damage would be, and make a conscious decision whether or not it was worth the collateral damage.Â Â We had to do that.

Interviewer

So then when thatâ€”Â

Rick Lynch

And you worked to minimize the collateral damage.

Interviewer

Thatâ€™s the clear,Â right?Â Â And then, I assume that what you have to do then is go in and manage the results of that.

Rick Lynch

Yeah, right.

Interviewer

Tell me how that happened.

Rick Lynch

Before we did the clear, we ensured that we had what we needed to do the hold and then the build.Â Â If youâ€™re going to establish a presence at a placeâ€”now, General Petraeus had us focus on securing the population.Â Â And to secure the population, you had to establish a permanent presenceâ€”and to do that, you had to build a patrol base.Â Â In the course of six months of operations there, we built 62 patrol bases.Â Â Major combat operations secured the areaâ€” got there with the right assets to build the patrol base, so you had that permanent presenceâ€”which caused it to be engineer-heavy.Â Â

Rick Lynch

I had ten years as an engineer officer.Â Â The book thatâ€™s on my bookshelf today isÂ Where are the Damn Engineers, and I found myself having to paceÂ operations based on shortage of engineers.Â Â I had all the instruments I needed, I had all the planes and tanks I needed, but if I didnâ€™t have the engineers that could buildâ€”once we had destroyedâ€”then I couldnâ€™t do the operation.Â Â So we had to think through all that.Â Â That was the next piece.Â Â

Rick Lynch

I can tell many stories of times where we just dropped the bombs and did the major combat operations, and in the peripheral vision was the engineers coming in.Â Â And they werenâ€™t coming in just to clear the routesâ€”which was a major piece of their roleâ€”but to start building.Â Â So horizontal and vertical construction was the essence of what we were doing.

Interviewer

Now, if youâ€™d done that two years before, it wouldâ€™ve been the clear and then there would have been nothing followingâ€”is that right?

Rick Lynch

Yeah, thereâ€™d have been no hold, because we didnâ€™t have the troops to stay there.Â Â You operate out of a big patrol base, you can mount up in helicopters or tanks or trucks, go do an operation.Â Â But if then youâ€”at the end of the operation you come back to your patrol base, you didnâ€™t hold anythingâ€”all you did was stirred up the

hornetâ€™s nest.A A You mightâ€™ve whacked a couple of insurgents, but at the same time, theyâ€™re now all mad, and theyâ€™re going to take it out on the local people.Â Â So now youâ€™ve created more enemies.Â Â

Rick Lynch

We talk about fence-sitters in Iraq.Â Â On any given day, thereâ€™s a lot of people who are deciding, do they want to be part of the problem, or do they want to be part of the solution.Â Â And if you did that operation, and then came back to your patrol base, you just knocked them over to part of the problem, thatâ€™s where they are.Â Â You just created more terrorists, more extremists, more criminals.

Interviewer

Letâ€™s stop here.

Rick Lynch

Okay.

Interviewer
Weâ€™ll pick up later.