



# **President George W. Bush Oral History Project**

## **BRIEFING MATERIALS**

**Ryan C. Crocker**

**September 9-10, 2010**

**Prepared by Evan D. McCormick, Research Assistant**  
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**Presidential Oral History Program**

**MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED OR CIRCULATED**

## RYAN C. CROCKER NEWS TIMELINE

*Prepared by Evan D. McCormick*

*Miller Center, University of Virginia, 06/29/2010*

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- 1972-1990** Ryan C. Crocker begins service as a Foreign Service Officer in the U.S. consulate in Khorramshar, Iran. Over the next 13 years he serves in a variety of Middle Eastern embassy posts including: Doha, Qatar (1974-1978); the U.S. interests section in the Belgian embassy in Baghdad (1978-1981); Beirut, Lebanon (1981-1985); Deputy Director of the Office of Israel and Arab-Israeli Affairs at State Department (1985-1987); and Political Counselor at the American embassy in Cairo (1987-1990).
- 1983** On April 19<sup>th</sup>, terrorists bomb the U.S. embassy in Beirut, killing 47 and injuring more than a hundred. Crocker, chief of the political section, is with Ambassador Robert Dillon inside the embassy but escapes with minor injuries and assists with rescue operations. (*The Washington Post*, 04/18/1983; *Newsweek*, 05/02/1983)
- 1990-1993** Crocker is U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon.
- 1994-1997** Crocker is appointed U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait.
- 1998-2001** Crocker serves as U.S. Ambassador to Syria.
- 2001** Crocker becomes Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs at the State Department in Washington, D.C.
- November* Crocker writes a letter to the Iraqi National Congress (INC), clarifying that \$8 million in funds offered by the State Department cannot be used for political activities within Iraq aimed at overthrowing Saddam Hussein. The INC refuses the money, citing a need to “enhance our activities inside Iraq.” (*The New York Times*, 11/10/2001; *The Washington Post*, 11/16/2001)
- December* In anticipation of a military effort to oust Saddam Hussein, Crocker leads a State Department delegation to northern Iraq under the auspices of mediating a dispute between two rival Kurdish factions. Secretary of State Colin Powell states that the visit is part of an evaluation of the prospects of “putting in place an armed opposition inside Iraq.” (*The New York Times*, 12/18/2001; *The Australian*, 12/12/2001)
- 2002**
- January* On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Crocker serves as Charge d’Affaires in the newly re-opened U.S. embassy in Kabul, pending the appointment of an ambassador. During a visit by Powell, Crocker announces to Afghans that “We’re back in business, and we’re going to stay that way.” (*The Washington Post*, 01/18/2002, 01/03/2002)

Crocker and White House official Zalmay Khalilzad secretly meet with Iranian officials to discuss potential cooperation in U.S. operations against Iraq. Crocker and Khalilzad reportedly ask Iran to seal its border in order to prevent Ba'athist officials from fleeing the country, and also suggest that U.S. operations might target the Iraq-based camps of the Mujaheddin-e Khalq Organization, an enemy of the regime in Tehran. (*The Washington Post*, 04/18/2003)

*April*

With Crocker's involvement, the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau commences the Future of Iraq project, assembling 200 Iraqi exiles to envision a structure for post-Saddam Iraq. The program is carried out in isolation of the Defense Department's war-planning efforts, which are focused on the postwar leadership of the Iraqi National Congress. (Karen DeYoung, *Soldier: The Life of Colin Powell*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006, pp. 397-398)

During Crocker's second visit in less than a year to meet with Kurdish opposition groups in Northern Iraq, terrorists attempt to assassinate the pro-Western prime minister of the Patriotic Union Kurdish (PUK), Barham Salih. Salih survives the attack—believed to be carried out with Saddam Hussein's support by the al-Qaeda affiliated Ansar-al-Islam—which occurs within close proximity to Crocker. (*The Christian Science Monitor*, 04/09/2002)

*November*

The Future of Iraq project produces a 102-page document titled "Final Report on the Transition to Democracy in Iraq." In later press and political accounts—notably that of presidential candidate Senator John Kerry (D-MA)—this report is portrayed as a State Department operational plan that is ignored by Department of Defense officials. However, Crocker is said to emphasize that the report represents only a discussion of various ideas, and not an actionable plan. (Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism*, New York: HarperCollins, 2008, p. 376)

*December*

Powell tasks Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs William Burns with preparing a memo on post-war contingencies in Iraq. Burns and Crocker produce "The Perfect Storm," a 12-page memo warning that Saddam's ouster could unleash long-simmering ethnic tensions in Iraq as Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds seek to settle old scores and vie for power. The memo also predicts that external powers like Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Iran will exploit the violence to gain regional influence. (DeYoung, p. 459)

**2003**

*March*

During the first month of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Crocker and other diplomatic and military officials offer daily, top-secret briefings on the progress of the war effort to interested members of Congress. (*The New York Times*, 03/29/2003)

*April*

*The Washington Times* reports that Crocker is the State Department's top pick for ambassador to post-war Iraq, but notes that his view of the Arab world is

“diametrically opposed” to the White House’s “vision of a democratic Iraq.”  
(*The Washington Times*, 04/03/2003)

Crocker represents the State Department at a summit in Nasiriya, Iraq of roughly 100 Iraqis convened to begin discussions on building a national government. The meeting is called by General Tommy Franks of U.S. Central Command, and includes the chief of U.S. reconstruction efforts Lt. General Jay Garner, special envoy to the Iraqi opposition Zalmay Khalilzad, and Larry Di Rita, a Special Assistant to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. While in Iraq, Crocker and Khalilzad tour Baghdad, reporting back to Washington that civil unrest is creating a vacuum that could be filled by warlords or Iranian elements. (*The New York Times*, 04/13/2003; *Newsweek*, 05/26/2003).

*May* Returning to Washington, Crocker and Khalilzad are informed that plans to form a national government will be delayed in favor of a U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) that will oversee reconstruction efforts. Crocker is asked to serve as an adviser on Iraqi politics to the head of the CPA, L. Paul “Jerry” Bremer. In the CPA’s tangled chain-of-command, Crocker reports to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, through Bremer. (DeYoung, pp. 465-466)

*July* Serving as the Director of Governance for the Coalition Provisional Authority, Crocker is closely involved in successful negotiations to establish an Iraqi interim government. The 25-member Governing Council includes members of all Iraqi factions, but is predominantly made up of Shiite Muslims and prominent exiles. (*The New York Times*, 07/13/2003)

*October* Crocker returns from Iraq, taking a temporary posting at the National War College where he teaches national security strategy and serves as international affairs advisor. (*The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 10/07/2003)

## **2004**

*July* On the 9<sup>th</sup>, *The Washington Post* writer David Ignatius reports that Crocker served as a U.S. envoy in secret meetings with Iranian officials following 9/11. Ignatius reports that the two sides seek an agreement to exchange al-Qaeda operatives captured by Iran for members of the Mujahideen-e Khalq captured by the United States in Iraq. The deal is reportedly favored by the State Department, but is opposed by the Defense Department. (*The Washington Post*, 07/09/2004)

*November* On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Crocker becomes U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, replacing Nancy Powell. In his first press conference, Crocker tells reporters that in order to capture Osama bin Laden, “We have to look for him in the right hole. . . .That day is not far off when we will reach that hole.” He goes on to say, “The problem of terrorism will not end with his capture. . . .There is a network, which is dangerous. To think al Qaeda will not exist after the capture of Osama is not right. We have to keep chasing it.” (*The Washington Times*, 12/01/2004)

## 2005

*May* Crocker does a series of damage control interviews with Muslim and Arab news outlets after *Newsweek* publishes an erroneous report that Guantanamo Bay interrogators have disrespected the Koran by flushing it down a toilet. (*The New York Times*, 05/18/2005)

*October* After an earthquake strikes the disputed Kashmir region between India and Pakistan, the U.S. military authorizes \$50 million in humanitarian relief. By March, relief efforts include an additional \$1.5 billion in assistance for education, health-care, governance, and economic growth. U.S. officials see the aid as crucial to building support for U.S. policies in South Asia. Crocker says, “the only way to win hearts and minds is if you deliver the goods. It’s not a PR campaign.” (*The International Herald Tribune*, 10/11/2005; *The Dallas Morning News*, 11/25/2006; *The Christian Science Monitor*, 03/31/2006)

## 2006

*January* Crocker is summoned by Pakistani officials to lodge a protest after a U.S. airstrike meant for al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri kills eighteen, including women and children. (*Daily Telegraph*, 01/16/2006)

*March* On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, President George W. Bush visits Islamabad—the first visit to Pakistan by a U.S. President in six years. In addition to signing economic and trade agreements, Bush is seen as showing support for the moderate Islamic government of General Pervez Musharraf. (*The New York Times*, 03/04/2006)

*July* Crocker draws attention from Pakistani media when he publicly remarks that Pakistan should allow exiled former Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif to return in order to run against Musharraf in elections. In *The New York Times*, Robert Kaplan speculates that the remarks signify a desire to gain more leverage in U.S. dealings with Musharraf. (*The New York Times*, 07/20/2006)

*October* Crocker is chided by the Indian Foreign Ministry for stating in an interview that India should not have publicly blamed Pakistan for terrorist bombings that occurred in July. A spokesman says, “Coming from a democracy like the United States, one would have expected Ambassador Crocker to understand that democratic governments have a primary responsibility to keep their own people fully informed.” (*The Washington Times*, 10/06/2006)

*November* Crocker is rumored to be the pending replacement for U.S. envoy to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad. (*The Washington Post*, 11/29/2006)

*December* On the 6<sup>th</sup>, the bi-partisan Iraq Study Group chaired by James A. Baker III and Lee H. Hamilton releases its findings. The report eschews the neoconservative policies of the Bush Administration, proposing a realist approach to Iraqi security

and Middle East diplomacy. The primary recommendations of the report include an amnesty program for insurgent fighters, a “diplomatic offensive” toward Israel-Palestine negotiations, and high-level talks on Iraq with Iran and Syria. While the report is openly critical of the Bush Administration’s policies, the Administration characterizes it as acknowledgment of reality. (*The Washington Post*, 12/07/2010)

## 2007

*January* The White House announces its intent to nominate Crocker as Ambassador to Iraq. Crocker, the first non-political appointee to hold the job, is considered part of a personnel shift accompanying Bush’s new Iraq strategy, built around a “surge” of more than 20,000 troops. (*The Washington Post*, 01/05/2007; *The Christian Science Monitor*, 01/11/2007)

*March* Crocker is confirmed as Ambassador to Iraq on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Days before Crocker arrives in Iraq, outgoing Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad confirms that U.S. and Iraqi government officials have been meeting with Sunni insurgent groups in the hopes of encouraging political compromise. In his final speech, Khalilzad defends the talks, arguing that they have not included al-Qaeda affiliated groups. He also calls upon the Iraq government to relax the de-Ba’athification laws that have prevented thousands of former government officials from taking jobs with the new government. (*The New York Times*, 03/27/2007)

On the 28<sup>th</sup>, Crocker is sworn in as Ambassador to Iraq. He flies directly from his post in Islamabad, Pakistan, foregoing the typical swearing-in ceremony in Washington. That same day, a series of attacks kill more than one hundred throughout Iraqi. (*The Washington Post*, 03/27/2007; *The New York Times*, 03/30/2007)

Reportedly, Crocker is well-received by embassy staff and begins a notably positive working relationship with General David Petraeus. *The Washington Post* reporter Thomas Ricks later writes that Crocker jokingly envisions himself and Petraeus as “two convicts on the run from a chain gang, ‘shackled’ together and so forced to cooperate.” (Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2009, p. 155)

*April* On the 13<sup>th</sup>, a suicide bomber attacks the Iraqi parliament building, wounding 23 and killing 8, including two legislators. The attack is called the worst violation of security to date in Baghdad’s Green Zone. (*The Washington Post*, 04/13/2007)

Crocker continues the Bush Administration’s policy of urging Iraqi legislators to relax de-Ba’athification procedures. Crocker tells the state-owned Iraqiya TV network, “it’s clear to me from the beginning that an enormous priority for Iraq, and for all of us, is a national reconciliation process that brings all Iraqis together in a single nation working for common purposes.” Crocker continues, “I see this

whole process of de-Ba'athification reform as leading to that end...we need to push forward." (*The Christian Science Monitor*, 04/23/2007)

## May

Attending a conference of foreign ministers on Iraq held in Egypt from the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice calls on Syrian officials to reduce the number of foreign fighters entering Iraq. Crocker acknowledges at a press conference that the number of foreign fighters has dropped in his first month on the job, possibly signaling an improved effort by the Syrian government. At the conference, Iraqi officials arrange for an informal discussion between Iranian and American officials. Declining to describe the details of the conversation, Crocker says it lasted about three minutes and was limited to Iraq. (*The Washington Post*, 05/05/2007)

On the 28<sup>th</sup>, Crocker meets with the Iranian ambassador to Iraq, Hassan Kazemi Qumi—the first official diplomatic meeting between the two countries since 1979. Both sides characterize the meeting as a positive step, agreeing fundamentally on the desire for a stable Iraq. In a news conference after the talks, Crocker tells reporters that the United States pressed Iran to back up its words by curbing its meddlesome activities in Iraq: “the problem lies, in our view, with the Iranians bringing their behavior on the ground into line with their own policy.” For its part, Iran offers to train Iraqi security forces, and proposes a trilateral commission for overseeing security issues in Iraq, which Crocker says he will consider. (*The New York Times*, 05/29/2007)

On the 31<sup>st</sup>, Crocker cables Rice bemoaning the lack of adequate staff and resources at the U.S. embassy in Baghdad. Stating that, “in essence, the issue is whether we are a Department and a Service at war,” Crocker asks Rice to hold all other post assignments until the Department’s best officers have been assigned to Iraq. Crocker also asks the State Department to relax its diplomatic security protocols which, he explains, are too restrictive to allow U.S. officials to do their job. (*The Washington Post*, 06/19/2007)

## June

On the 14<sup>th</sup>, a revered Shiite shrine in Baghdad is bombed by Sunni terrorists. In a joint statement, Crocker and Petraeus call the attack “an act of desperation by an increasingly beleaguered enemy seeking to obstruct the peaceful political and economic development of a democratic Iraq.” The following day, 13 Sunni mosques are targeted in retaliatory attacks, but the violence does not escalate to the open sectarian warfare feared by U.S. and Iraqi officials. Crocker credits the leadership of the Iraqi government in curbing retaliatory action. (*The Washington Post*, 06/15/2007)

Having completed the “surge” of 30,000 additional troops to Iraq, U.S. forces begin a major offensive against al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia. As Defense Secretary Robert Gates visits Iraq to express American disappointment in the pace of Iraqi reconciliation, Crocker publicly emphasizes the indigenous nature of the political process: “These have to be Iraqi decisions and Iraqi compromises if they are

really going to take effect....We can't come up with solutions as the United States and expect to impose them or impose timelines and say, 'You've got to do this for the future of your country.'" (*The New York Times*, 06/17/2007)

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, responding to Crocker's cable of May 31, Rice issues instructions to fill all Baghdad embassy positions before other posts are made available. The same day, indirect fire to the embassy blows shrapnel through the window of Crocker's office, but he is unharmed. (*The Washington Post*, 06/21/2007)

## July

As the Senate debates proposals to draw back the U.S. presence in Iraq or pull troops out altogether, Crocker tells *The New York Times* in an interview that such action would lead to increased violence and a regional conflict involving Iraq's neighbors. (*The New York Times*, 07/10/2007)

With Crocker and Petraeus scheduled to testify to Congress on the formal assessment of the surge in September, the White House on the 12<sup>th</sup> releases the first of its congressionally-mandated interim assessment reports. The report—drafted by the National Security Council with input from Petraeus, Crocker, Defense, State and others—says that the Iraqi government has made “satisfactory progress” on 8 of the 18 political-military benchmarks established by Congress. While progress is mostly seen in military areas, the report cites unsatisfactory progress in 8 of the benchmarks that deal with political progress. The report comes amidst calls for Bush to accelerate the timetable for troop withdrawal in Iraq, and a flurry of “defections” by Republican senators undercutting support for Bush's war plan. The President states that he will not consider a new course until the official report from Petraeus and Crocker in September. (*The Washington Post*, 07/12/2007, 07/13/2007)

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, Crocker and other officials in Iraq warn U.S. lawmakers that the report they deliver in September will not be final, and that more time will be needed to judge the full effectiveness of the surge. Lawmakers in turn warn officials that time is running out. (*The New York Times*, 07/20/2007)

On the 24<sup>th</sup>, Crocker meets with his Iranian counterpart, Hassan Kazemi-Qumi, for the second round of bilateral talks. In a “full and frank” discussion, Crocker voices U.S. concerns that Iran is providing materiel and training to Shiite militias attacking American-led forces in Iraq. The Iranians in turn argue that Iraqis are being “victimized by terror and the presence of foreign forces.” The two sides discuss the formation of a security subcommittee to discuss militias, al-Qaeda, and border security, but Crocker is reported to be “clearly frustrated” by the lack of progress during the talks. (*New York Times*, 07/25/2007)

## August

On the 6<sup>th</sup>, Crocker meets with Iranian counterparts for talks on Iraqi security. The meeting occurs as the U.S. is seeing a rapid increase in the number of deaths caused by roadside bombs believed to be manufactured in Iran. Crocker states that there has been “an escalation, not a de-escalation” of Iranian involvement in



Iraqi violence, though the Iranians maintain that they are not involved. (*The New York Times*, 08/08/2007)

After a number of influential Sunni legislators walk out of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government, Crocker leads an emergency summit to prevent the government from total collapse. Meanwhile, a quadruple truck bombing on the 16<sup>th</sup> kills more than 250 Iraqis in the bloodiest coordinated attack since the U.S. invasion in 2003. (*The New York Times*, 08/16/2007)

In the run-up to the surge hearings, legislative and public dissatisfaction with Maliki intensifies in the United States. Echoing comments by Bush, Crocker calls the political progress in Iraq "extremely disappointing," and warns that U.S. support is not backed by a "blank check." (*The New York Times*, 08/22/2007)

*September* On the 5<sup>th</sup>, Bush makes a surprise visit to Basra, signaling the possibility of troop reductions due to progress made by the surge. (*The Washington Post*, 09/07/2007)

On the 7<sup>th</sup>, Crocker sends an urgent cable to Washington entitled "Iraqi Refugee Processing: Can We Speed It Up?" The cable warns that it could take up to two years to process the roughly 10,000 refugees designated by the UN for resettlement in the United States. While security reviews and inadequate staffing have caused delays, Iraqi refugees—many of whom have worked alongside U.S. troops—are increasingly being targeted by sectarian violence. (*The Washington Post*, 09/17/2007)

On the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Petraeus and Crocker testify to House and Senate committees, reporting on the progress of the surge. Petraeus argues that the additional 30,000 troops have provided enough additional security to allow for their withdrawal by summer 2008, though he cautions against "rushing to failure." (*The Washington Post*, 09/11/2007) Crocker's testimony acknowledges Iraq's slow progress in achieving political stability—the original objective of the surge—but stresses the historic and social magnitude of changes underway. Both warn of Iran's attempts to foment violence inside Iraq via Shiite militias. In a speech later in the week, Bush endorses the report. Democrats and some Republicans, particularly in the Senate, continue to object to the slow pace of withdrawal and lack of political progress accompanying military success. (*The Washington Post*, 09/12/2007)

*November* Crocker pressures regional Sunni governments to increase their presence in Iraq—no Arab country at this point has an embassy in Baghdad—in order to "boost the confidence" of Iraqi Sunnis. (*The Washington Post*, 11/15/2007)

On the 7<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. military announced plans to release nine Iranian hostages being held on suspicion of assisting Shiite militias. The move is seen as an effort

to reduce tensions between the United States and Iran in the region, potentially as a quid pro quo for further talks. (*The Christian Science Monitor*, 11/07/2007)

With sectarian violence on an apparent decline, Crocker emphasizes that Iraq's political progress will occur on Iraqi, not American, timetables: "We are past the point where it is an American agenda...it is what needs to be done in Iraqi terms." (*The New York Times*, 11/25/2007)

*December* David Satterfield, the State Department Coordinator for Iraq and senior adviser to Rice, tells *The Washington Post* that the Iranian government has decided to "rein in" the Shiite militias that the United States blames for the escalation of violence in Iraq. Sounding more skeptical, Crocker says that "should [Tehran] choose to corroborate it in a direct fashion," the decision would bode well for the upcoming round of talks with his Iranian counterparts. (*The Washington Post*, 12/23/2007)

## 2008

*January* On the 13<sup>th</sup>, Bush travels to the region, meeting with Petraeus and Crocker in Kuwait. In what is hailed as a concrete sign of political reconciliation, the Iraqi parliament on the 14<sup>th</sup> passes legislation allowing lower-level Ba'ath party officials to hold government positions, while imposing a strict ban on others. The law is praised in the U.S. as overdue progress toward reconciliation, although Sunnis are skeptical of the law's punishment of many Ba'athists who, they warn, will now be forced to the fringe. (*The New York Times*, 01/13/2008, 01/14/2008)

*February* On the 13<sup>th</sup>, Iraqi politicians vote across sectarian lines to pass a comprehensive package of legislation signaling national reconciliation between Sunnis and Shiites. Measures include a national budget, a law detailing the government's provincial powers, and an amnesty law that will affect thousands of detainees in Iraqi jails. Crocker calls the legislation—particularly regarding provincial powers—a "landmark law" in which "Iraqi legislators have reached an historic compromise." (*The New York Times*, 02/14/2008)

*March* On the 26<sup>th</sup>, weeks before Petraeus and Crocker are set to deliver their second update on the surge to Congress, Iraqi forces launch an offensive aimed at defeating the Shiite militia forces of Moqtada al-Sadr in Basra. The offensive is unsuccessful, and is seen as strengthening al-Sadr's political clout. Frank Rich of *The New York Times* likens it to a "mini-Tet." (*The New York Times*, 04/06/2008; *The Washington Times*, 03/26/2008)

*April* Crocker tells *USA Today* that he expects political and economic progress to continue in Iraq, despite the violence caused by the government's failed offensive against the al-Sadr militia. Crocker admits that the offensive took U.S. officials by surprise, but points to other decisions by the Iraqi government that demonstrate unity across sectarian lines. Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) criticizes the Administration for changing its definition of success to fit the data: "this

administration—and that extends to Ambassador Crocker—continues to define success downward.” (*USA Today*, 04/03/2008)

On the 8<sup>th</sup>, Crocker and Petraeus testify again to the Congress on the results of the surge. Together they recommend that after the surplus troops have been withdrawn from Iraq, the United States should “pause” for 45 days for “consolidation and evaluation” before making further decisions regarding troop levels. Crocker reiterates his concern that Iranian influence is causing the “Lebanonization” of Iraq—likening Iran’s support for Shiite militias to its role in creating Hezbollah in the 1980s. (*The Christian Science Monitor*, 04/09/2008)

In an interview with *The New York Times*, Crocker states that after one year’s worth of diplomatic engagement, Iran continues to subvert American policy in Iraq by supporting Shiite militias. The interview is seen as part of an intensification of criticism by Administration officials toward the Iranian regime in the wake of the battle in Basra. (*New York Times*, 04/12/2008)

May On the 13<sup>th</sup>, Iranian officials broker a ceasefire to end the violence in Basra. Crocker and Petraeus dismiss the alleged Iraq-Iran cooperation as an attempt by Iran to establish itself as a power broker in the region. (*The Christian Science Monitor* 05/12/2008)

June On the 1<sup>st</sup>, *The Washington Post* proclaims that U.S.-backed Iraqi forces may be winning the war, noting Crocker’s statement that “the terrorists have never been closer to defeat than they are now.” (*The Washington Post*, 06/01/2008)

On the 6<sup>th</sup>, Crocker dismisses a media report that the United States is secretly planning to establish permanent bases on Iraqi soil as “untrue”. (*The New York Times*, 06/06/2008)

Responding to a report in *The New Yorker* that the Bush Administration has authorized \$400 million to expand covert operations in Iran, Crocker tells CNN that “I can tell you flatly that U.S. forces are not operating across the Iraqi border into Iran, in the south or anywhere else.” (*The Washington Post*, 06/30/2008)

July On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the U.S. embassy releases a report stating that Iraq has met 15 of the 18 congressionally mandated benchmarks for progress. (*The Washington Post*, 07/02/2008)

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, the Administration sends representatives to attend international talks with Iranian officials. Notwithstanding Crocker’s earlier meetings, it represents a departure from stated Administration policy to only engage in talks when Iran has abandoned its quest for enriched uranium. (*The New York Times*, 07/17/2008)

On the 21<sup>st</sup>, Democratic Presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) visits Iraq, meeting with troops, Iraqi leaders, and U.S. officials. Obama calls his

conversation with Crocker “terrific.” During the visit, an Iraqi spokesman reiterates his government’s endorsement of a timetable for American withdrawal that would have most forces out of the country by 2010—a timetable similar to that proposed by the Obama campaign. White House officials dismiss the remarks. (*The Washington Post*, 07/22/2008)

*August* Crocker is closely involved in Iraqi political negotiations to overcome an impasse regarding provincial election law. The negotiations fail, and the Iraqi parliament adjourns for the summer without passing the law. (*The New York Times*, 08/07/2008)

*September* On the 17<sup>th</sup>, Petraeus hands over command of U.S. forces in Iraq to Lt. General Ray Odierno. Gates presents Petraeus with the Defense Distinguished Service Medal and—in an unexpected move—awards Crocker the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Civilian Service. The medal is the top honor awarded by the Pentagon to civilian officials. During a formal dinner for Crocker and Petraeus, Gates likens their strategy to “good cop, bad cop,” and praises them for “having forged the strongest, most successful diplomatic-military working relationship in more than a generation.” (*The New York Times*, 09/16/2008)

*November* On the 5<sup>th</sup>, Crocker hosts 250 Iraqi officials, diplomats, and dignitaries for a celebration of the American presidential election, and the first event held at the new American embassy. The event is held while U.S. and Iraqi officials remain locked in disagreement over a Status of Forces Agreement to govern the U.S. military presence in the country. (*The New York Times*, 11/06/2008)

*December* On the 28<sup>th</sup>, the Iraqi Parliament approves the Status of Forces agreement signed between Hashyar Zebari and Crocker, governing U.S. troops in the country until the end of 2011. The agreement reverses Bush’s stated commitment to avoid a specific withdrawal date, but military officials publicly back the agreement. (*The Washington Post*, 12/28/2008)

## **2009**

*January* On the 1<sup>st</sup>, as part of the newly-signed Status of Forces Agreement, the U.S. officially transfers control of Baghdad’s Green Zone to Iraq. (*The Washington Post*, 01/01/2009)

On the 5<sup>th</sup>, Crocker officially opens the new U.S. embassy, calling the dedication a “cause for both pride and humility.” (*The New York Times*, 01/06/2009)

On the 15<sup>th</sup>, Bush awards Crocker the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his service in the Middle East. Bush describes Crocker as “America’s Lawrence of Arabia.” (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>)

On the 22<sup>nd</sup>—Obama’s first full day in office—the President meets with top officials on Iraq, including Crocker, and orders them to “engage in additional planning necessary to execute a responsible military drawdown.” (*The New York Times*, 01/22/2009) The following day, Crocker tells the media in Iraq that he is opposed to a rapid withdrawal of American forces: “If it were to be a precipitous withdrawal, that could be very dangerous,” although he adds, that it is “clear that’s not the direction in which this is trending.” (*The New York Times*, 01/23/2009)

*February* On February 13, Crocker departs his post as Ambassador. He goes on to become dean of the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. (*The New York Times*, 04/22/2009; *The International Herald Tribune*, 04/29/2010)

## TIMELINES

- Ryan C. Crocker Timeline, prepared by Evan D. McCormick, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 06/28/2010.
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## **RYAN C. CROCKER SUGGESTED TOPICS**

*Prepared by Evan D. McCormick*

*Miller Center, University of Virginia, 09/01/2010*

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### ***A Career in Diplomacy***

- What relationships and career experiences were most valuable to you in preparing you to assume a State Department post in the George W. Bush administration in 2001? From your perspective, what were the key historical developments in Lebanon, Kuwait, and Syria in the 1990s that shaped the environment President Bush inherited in 2001?
- Are there important successes, failures, or missed opportunities in the region (before the 43<sup>rd</sup> presidency) that history should record during your time there? Did you have much engagement with the George H.W. Bush White House, or Clinton's, during your time as ambassador? Were there any lessons learned from those years that served you well later?

### ***Origins of Relationship with President Bush***

- Discuss how you came to be appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs by President Bush. What did you anticipate would be the most important part of your portfolio when you accepted the position?
- Did you have detailed conversations with the Secretary of State about your new role in advance of taking the job? Any such conversations with Condoleezza Rice? The president himself?

### ***The War on Terror and Iraq***

- What was your personal experience on 9/11/2001? Did your superiors in the State Department or the White House seek out your knowledge about the region in the aftermath of the attacks? What was your role in the ensuing months?
- Discuss how the countries in your region reacted to the attacks and the initial U.S. response.
- What, if any, was the role of the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs in the Administration's decision to invade Afghanistan? To overthrow Saddam Hussein?
- Describe your involvement in the State Department's planning process prior to the invasion of Iraq. How closely were the efforts at State integrated with Defense's war planning efforts?
- What was your role in producing the 2002 memo, "The Perfect Storm," and how was it received within the Administration? Did it have resonance outside of the State Department?

### ***Postwar Reconstruction***

- Describe the Iraq you first encountered on the ground. In what ways did your first experiences in postwar-Baghdad confirm or challenge the expectations articulated in "The Perfect Storm"?
- Describe your role as a State Department representative in the initial efforts to create an Iraqi national government. Prior to the creation of the Coalition Provisional Authority, what factors limited U.S. ability to foster security and political cooperation among Iraqis?
- In what ways did the CPA improve the U.S. ability to oversee postwar reconstruction?
- How did you become Director of Governance for the CPA? What were your duties in that position? With whom did you work most closely and to whom did you report?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Iraqi Governing Council formed in 2003?

- What are the key success stories, failures, or missed opportunities from this time?

### ***Pakistan***

- Discuss your appointment as U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan. What key issues did you confront as Ambassador to Pakistan, and what were your primary objectives?
- Provide a portrait of the importance of Pakistan as a regional actor during your time as ambassador there. How cooperative was the Pakistani government in the war on terror?
- Discuss the extent to which Islamic fundamentalism, and geopolitics, limited the Pakistani government's flexibility in supporting American efforts during your time there?

### ***Ambassador to Iraq***

- Did your 2007 appointment as Ambassador to Iraq—concurrent with several other key personnel changes—signal a change of course for the Administration's Iraq policy?
- What were the main policy issues that you confronted upon arrival in Iraq in 2007, and how did you conceive of your primary objectives?
- Describe the working relationship that developed between you and General Petraeus. How closely did you coordinate the political and military work on Iraq?
- How did the surge of 30,000 additional U.S. troops affect the sectarian violence and political reconciliation in Iraq?
- During the surge, how effectively did the different components of the executive branch—the State Department, the White House, and Defense—work together and did this represent an improvement over earlier situations?
- Did the fact of congressional oversight in any way complicate your efforts?
- At what point did you have a sense that the momentum was turning in Iraq?
- What was the significance of the Status-of-Forces Agreement signed at the end of 2008?

### ***The Middle East and Bush's Legacy***

- How engaged was the president personally in the issues you dealt with during his presidency? Were you able to observe how the President made decisions on matters of foreign policy?
- How did Middle Eastern officials—particularly Iraqi leaders—view George W. Bush? Were there any common beliefs or misconceptions?
- How effectively did State, Defense, and the White House coordinate the planning and execution of policy in the lead-up to the Iraq War, and during postwar reconstruction?
- Was there a change in the character of executive branch coordination following Bush's re-election, particularly after Condoleezza Rice replaced Colin Powell as Secretary of State?
- How did the mounting domestic criticism of Bush's Iraq policy, and calls for rapid American withdrawal, affect the President's approach to decision-making?
- In your view, what Iraqi political issues were most essential to achieving progress that satisfied American objectives, and how effectively did U.S. policy help to resolve those issues?
- Discuss the scope of your diplomatic efforts with Iran throughout the course of the Bush presidency. What factors were involved in the Administration's decision to hold high-level talks with Iranian officials in Iraq? How did the tone and substance of official talks with Iran in 2007-2008 differ from your interactions with Iranian officials prior to the war?

- Were the Administration's policies in the Middle East guided by a strategic vision that fully appreciated the complexities of regional politics?

***The Bush Presidency in Retrospect***

- What do you consider your greatest accomplishments as a U.S. diplomat during the Bush Administration?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Bush presidency? What features of the Bush presidency were overlooked or misunderstood by the press?
- How effective was Bush as a foreign policy leader?