



Father of Money: Buying Peace in Baghdad

Jason Whiteley

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In March 2004, Capt. Jason Whiteley was appointed the governance officer for Al Dora, one of Baghdad's most violent districts. His job was to establish and oversee a council structure for Iraqis that would allow them to begin governing themselves. The nature of persuading Iraqis to support the coalition quickly progressed from simply granting them privileges to ignore curfews to a more complex relationship defined by illicit dealing, preferential treatment, and a vicious cycle of assassination attempts. In these streets of Al Dora, Whiteley was feared and loved as the man they called Abu Floos—or “Father of Money.”

Father of Money is the story of Captain Whiteley's journey into a moral morass, where bribes and blood money, not principle, governed the dissemination of power and possibility of survival. The Iraqi people did not have the patience to withstand daily violence while they waited for the American ideals to crystallize. Captain Whiteley acted to fill this void by allying himself with the leaders who had the best chance of consolidating power, even if they were former insurgents. Eventually, because of these efforts, Captain Whiteley was himself targeted for assassination, signaling an end to his period of extensive influence.

Although Captain Whiteley viewed this as a failure, he knew that he needed to reveal a part of Iraqi society that few Americans would ever witness. By delving into the Iraqi culture, Captain Whiteley had dispensed justice, divined futures, and bestowed fortunes in a way the Iraqi people understood and appreciated. This is the story of how change actually occurs in a society devoid of order.

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